

socceritalia

follow @socceritalia on Facebook & Twitter



THE SEASON
STARTS
HERE

TEAMS
PLAYERS
COACHES
FIXTURES
TRANSFERS
RECORDS
CITIES

2014/15 SERIE A SEASON GUIDE



UEFA
EURO2016
FRANCE
KICK OFF



THE NEW
AZZURRI
TAKE FLIGHT



PLUS
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
AND EUROPA LEAGUE
CONTENDERS

ISSUE #74
Display until November 25, 2014



0 61399 70488 7 10
issue seventy-four

Mario Balotelli

Italian Striker. Newspaper Dream.

*FOREVER***FASTER PUMA** 



BRITISH COLUMBIA



ALBERTA



ONTARIO



a votre service depuis 1985

QUÉBEC



» contents

- 4 Season Preview**
New Ambitions
- 6 The Teams**

Atalanta	Lazio
Cagliari	Milan
Cesena	Napoli
Chievo Verona	Palermo
Empoli	Parma
Fiorentina	Roma
Genoa	Sampdoria
Hellas Verona	Sassuolo
Inter Milan	Torino
Juventus	Udinese
- 48 Season Preview**
Stars in the making
The Hot list
- 52 Q&A with the New Boys**
Nemanja Vidic
Pablo D. Osvaldo
Ashley Cole
Patrice Evra
- 54 International Scene**
Italy turn to Conte
- 58 Season Preview**
The Coaches
Serie A Cities
- 64 The Transfers**
- 68 Serie A Records**
- 72 Tournament News**
- 74 Around the Peninsula**
- 80 The Final Word**
No pride in Serie A shambles

» socceritalia

ISSUE 74 - OCT. 2014



BENVENUTI

If pre-season has been anything to go by, the new Serie A campaign is going to be explosive. Just 48 hours after returning to the training fields of Vinovo, Antonio Conte decided to call time on his love affair with Juventus. Having led the side to three consecutive Scudetti since his arrival in 2011, the former midfielder insisted that his spell with the Old Lady bench had reached a natural conclusion. It was a shock decision, but more in its timing than its announcement. Conte had already intimated at the end of last season – a campaign where the Turin giants romped to the championship with a record 102 points – that he was pondering his future. Crunch talks in May led to the conclusion that he would remain for the final year of his contract, but the summer sun didn't get rid of his doubts. Less than a day later and Massimiliano Allegri was handed control of Italy's most potent footballing force.

For more than one critic, Conte's decision to stand down instantly opened up the Scudetto race. An aggressive man-motivator, the now new Italy boss was a tactician who somehow got a Juve side to win the championship after two consecutive seventh-placed finishes. Allegri, on the other hand, is a much milder Coach whose struggles at Milan in recent years have overshadowed the Serie A title he won with the Diavolo at his first attempt. Juventus will still start the season as favourites for the championship, but that is arguably because of the players they have managed to keep a hold of rather than the new faces which have been brought in. While the likes of Alvaro Morata, Kingsley Coman and Roberto Pereyra bode well, the fact that Paul Pogba and Arturo Vidal are still in black and white is much more significant.

While La Vecchia Signora have been in a class of their own domestically, that hasn't exactly been the case on the continent. Their inability to reach the knock-out phases of the Champions League last season provided another dent in the body work of the Italian game. The peninsula desperately need them and Roma to make strides this time around. Juve have been gifted a decent draw, but the capital outfit have been handed the toughest section out of the lot. Even with all the new boys secured by sporting director Walter Sabatini, the Giallorossi will probably have to over-perform in order to reach the last 16. Considering Napoli's failure to get through the Champions League play-offs recently, calcio has a lot to prove to the neutral.

Italian football desperately needs to rebuild its reputation. On the field, clubs have routinely struggled in European competition and the World Cup was a debacle. Off the field and it is clear that outfits can no longer compete on the transfer market for the true top players, while we've seen more than one talented striker this summer – Mario Balotelli and Ciro Immobile for example – move to foreign clubs. Serie A is no longer Europe's most prestigious League, it doesn't have the financial clout that it once did and thus doesn't offer the greatest supporting cast of players in the world game, but you'd be making a mistake in turning your back on her.

Show her the respect that she deserves and you'll be rewarded with drama and controversy that only Italy can deliver. The next nine months will illustrate that.

Forza
Antonio Labbate, Editor

EDITOR Antonio Labbate
MARKETING DIRECTOR Mario Calabretta
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Bill Asaro
DESIGN / LAYOUT Gary Robinson, Nick Libertucci & Mayra Aguilar
PRODUCTION EDITOR Mark Wheatley
SUBSCRIPTION COORDINATOR Tamara Hausner
WEBMASTERS Frank Calabretta & Paul Di Munno
CONTRIBUTORS
 Susy Campanale, Livio Caferoglu, Luca Cetta, Anthony Ciriello, Antonio Labbate, Sam Lewis, Jeremy Lim, Rossella Marrai, Varun Mathure, Aislaide Mackenzie, Alex Mott, Rob Paton, Luca Persico, Aman Sehdev, Mark Siglioccolo, Andrea Tallarita, Dave Taylor, Richard Thomas, Frank Tigani, Andrew Tuft, Lorenzo Vicini

PHOTOGRAPHY Action Images, AP Images, Richiardi (Milan)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Save on the newsstand price by subscribing to *Soccer Italia*

1-877-681-8553

Email: subscription@socceritalia.net

PRINTED IN CANADA
 All content copyright JDT Sports & Direct Image 2014. All rights reserved. While we make every effort to ensure that the factual content of Soccer Italia is correct, we cannot take any responsibility nor be held accountable for any factual errors printed.
 No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without the prior consent of JDT Sports & Direct Image. JDT Sports & Direct Image recognizes all copyrights contained within this issue. Where possible we acknowledge the copyright holder.

CONTACT All inquiries email or call
info@socceritalia.net or 1-877-681-8553

SOCCER ITALIA MAGAZINE
PUBLISHED BY DIRECT IMAGE MEDIA
 3938 Cottrelle Blvd. Suite 80095 COTTRELLE,
 Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6P 2W7

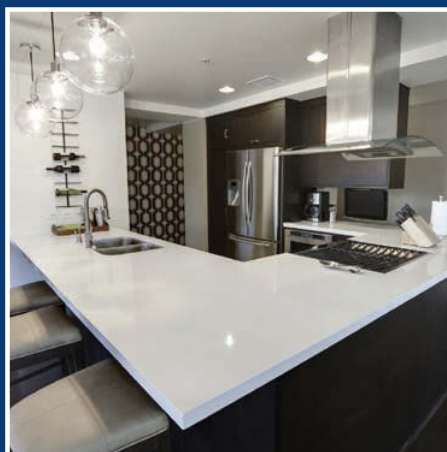
posticino
RISTORANTE

Come and enjoy the best of
Modern Italian Cuisine in a
comfortable atmosphere.

755 The Queensway
Toronto, Ontario M8Z 1M8
Tel: 416-253-9207



INTERCITY REALTY IS EVERYWHERE



Selling or buying Real Estate?
Choose Intercity Realty Inc., Brokerage

A high powered independent agency with over 40 years
of experience to serve all your real estate needs.



416-798-7070
www.intercityrealty.com



Residential Re-Sale • New Homes & Condos • Industrial Commercial Investment • Land Transactions

NEW AMBITIONS



"ROMA HAVE STRENGTHENED IN THE TRANSFER MARKET, HOPEFUL THEIR NEW SIGNINGS CAN IMMERSE THEIR HOPES FOR SILVERWARE IN EVEN GREATER CREDIBILITY."

Roma President James Pallotta is a man with grand designs for the future. His pioneering principles of sports management continue to push the boundaries in Italy. The businessman's flagship lies in plans for the construction of the 52,500 capacity Stadio della Roma. A privately-owned and operated home ground, the structure will be modelled after the Colosseum – of course – and could be ready in time for the 2016-17 season. It is another step in a

journey Pallotta envisages will take Roma amongst the "top three or five sports brands in the world."

The project is a great source of Roman pride. The question that remains, however, is whether it is a winning one. One that is capable of delivering trophies. Certainly, if their commercial expansion is to gain maximum headway, Roma will first have to oust Italian champions Juventus from their perch. Rudi Garcia's side already chased the Serie A front-runners relentlessly last term. The neck-and-neck title race had enthralled fans and served as a fantastic advertisement for Serie A. In the final accounting, the resurgent Giallorossi came up blank even as they surged to a record-breaking points total. But they had still signalled their intentions clearly. "Next season we might put together fewer points and win the Scudetto anyway," their Coach declared.

Garcia's boldness has since taken on more placid form. The Frenchman still rates his men outsiders for the title, even if Juventus have lost former boss Antonio Conte. Squad veterans such as Daniele De Rossi rightly insist that their main rivals remain just as formidable without the serial Scudetto winner in charge. And so Roma have strengthened accordingly in the transfer market, hopeful their new signings, led by the exciting Argentine attacker Juan Iturbe, can bridge the gap and immerse their hopes for silverware in even greater credibility. Perhaps even plug the hole at the back left by the departure of arguably last season's key player, Mehdi Benatia.

"I think our strength will be to have two players per position. We need to maintain our will to win. It will be much harder compared to last season, but it will be interesting," Garcia opined. Their depth and character will come under closer scrutiny, now the real reckoning has arrived in the need to juggle both domestic and European competitions. But there is already an unshakeable sense that their capabilities are more aligned to their ambitions than ever before. "Is this the strongest Roma I've seen? I think so. We have had players arrive who have made us grow a level. We want to win this Scudetto," Miralem Pjanic, the fantastic Bosnian who's pledged his future to the club, insists. "We are in for a special season, we know," captain Francesco Totti confirmed.

A special season, indeed. The Olimpico crowd is awash with enthusiasm as Roma anticipate the start, inevitably obliged to lock horns with Juve once more. Exact moods are harder to gauge in the Bianconeri camp. A densely-plotted pre-season has failed to assuage the uncertainty ahead of the new campaign. Of course, the winning traits of a squad that stood a class apart from the rest of Serie A by sweeping to three consecutive Scudetti are not void overnight. Yet

the laws of gravity – imposed on a side that clinched a perfect home record en route to breaking the 100-points barrier last time out – suggest the only way from there is down.

New trainer Massimiliano Allegri has pledged to resist that slide with all his might. "I just want to have one more point than second place," he says. The 47-year-old isn't counting on miracles to fill the sizeable shoes vacated by Conte. "I understand the scepticism of the fans because in practically a day the Coach changed at Juventus. How to win them over? With results, work, respect and professionalism."

If the club faithful are expecting a carbon copy of Conte's methods to be enacted though, they're badly mistaken. Allegri intends on leaving the autocratic eccentricities of his predecessor behind almost as if the antithesis of the last three years, even if he respects the outfit's winning sensibilities.

"Vinovo is not Alcatraz," ran the cover of sports daily Corriere dello Sport one morning. "Everyone has their own character," team captain Gianluigi Buffon considered. "There is no formula that guarantees victory. Allegri is a Coach that is one of the group, not above it, and it is a quality that I like."

Better to evolve, than to appoint an unconvincing copy after all. "Although this team is the brainchild of Conte, I think Allegri has been signed for his quality and experience," Buffon continued. "Allegri has completely different ideas. Formations, patterns. He brings forward ideas that are very innovative. It is easy to learn his new training methods, or changes related to tactics."

In particular, the boss has quickly emphasised the need to be tactically versatile both on the pitch and via the club's reinforcements in the transfer window.

"MARIO BALOTELLI WASN'T MILAN'S TOP PLAYER. IN HIS ABSENCE, STEPHAN EL SHAARAWY HAS STEPPED UP SYMBOLICALLY TO LIFT THE ROSSONERI."

Serie A's deepest squad is currently drowning in even more tactical options. To date, progress switching to a four-man defence in friendly tests and deploying a



Giallorossi boss Rudi Garcia will be eager to build on the fine work Roma showcased last season

After a summer of comprehensive strengthening, could Francesco Totti's Roma oust Juventus for the Scudetto this year?

TAKE FLIGHT

With the return of Serie A, Italy's traditional powers will go back to doing battle as they strive to clinch their targets, writes **Jeremy Lim**



Trequartista may have been underwhelming. But Allegri is convinced the ability to change shape will pay dividends as the invigorated Old Lady aim for the feat of making it four titles in a row. "Allegri has made us understand that we will not dwell on a single formation. We have a list of qualities that allows us to change identity during the game," midfield workhorse Claudio Marchisio underlined. The rest will then be up to the team. "It's normal that Juventus should be favourites after three Scudetti in a row," asserts Allegri. "As far as the team goes, they have dominated in Italy. We will be playing for the League right until the end."

Crucially, the Turin giants have been shown willing to back their man. "The Coach is very important, but you need togetherness between him, the club and the players. At Juve I have found this," the former Panchina d'Oro winner cited. "At Milan it was there for three years." The feelings of betrayal from his former employers after he was sacked in January still rankles on in Allegri. It probably burns inside Clarence Seedorf, the man who took over in the Rossoneri dugout, too. Undeterred by the acrimonious ends of those who went before him, Filippo Inzaghi was promoted from the club's youth set-up to the helm of the first team.

A massive clean-up job awaits. Pippo must steer a house of whims, boardroom politics and a team whose winning cycle expired long before he inherited it. Adriano Galliani, the primary advocate behind Inzaghi's ascension, believes the former striker is ready to restore the glory days his goals were once such a major part of however. "He's the right man in the right place," the club CEO declared.

Instead of lurking in the penalty box this time, Inzaghi, once noted for his larger-than-life personality on the pitch, is seeking to inspire his charges by transmitting the hunger he had constantly displayed as a player. Another eighth-placed finish will not be tolerated. "The Milan shirt must go back to mattering. Our target is to bring the fans back to San Siro and make sure they recognise this team," he promised. "I will

always forgive a technical error, but never the wrong attitude. Anyone who doesn't fight for the club will not be a part of my Milan."

Despite that, spirit will only take them so far. A disastrous pre-season tour of the United States didn't allay grave doubts. Gennaro Gattuso, Inzaghi's former teammate, feels Milan currently still lack a top player to take their upcoming season to another plain. Presumably, Mario Balotelli wasn't one. The Italy enigma departed Serie A for the Premier League yet again in August, chastened after failing to produce the performances Milan had wanted – needed – but rarely received.

In Super Mario's stead, Stephan El Shaarawy stepped up symbolically to lift his side to the TIM Cup. Diego Lopez and Alex, arrived in the summer to bolster Milan's core, helped clinch victory against Juventus and Sassuolo in the three-way friendly tournament. When Jeremy Menez despatched a spot-kick – the ones Balotelli used to take – past the latter opponent, a collective sigh of relief arose from supporters. It seems life at Milanello carries on.

The current side is clearly no vintage, but Inzaghi signals Milan's desire to begin again. If the former giants can just follow the lead of those around them in Serie A, then their ambitions might too propel them onwards and upwards.



Mario Balotelli is now part of Milan's past. New Milan boss Filippo Inzaghi will now turn to Stephan El Shaarawy to get the club's upward climb going



Massimiliano Allegri was brought in as Antonio Conte's replacement at Juventus, and will aim to extend the Italian champions' winning run with his methods

A THRONG FOR EUROPE

Playing at Napoli's San Paolo is always a daunting prospect for rivals, given the wall of noise supporters lay down every match. Recently though, members of the Partenopei have experienced first-hand the feelings of terror the raucous crowd can induce. Lorenzo Insigne's fellow Neapolitans turned on him following a sub-par showing against Athletic Bilbao in the Champions League qualifying stages. A week earlier in a friendly with Paris-Saint Germain, President Aurelio De Laurentiis had been heckled by banners over a perceived lack of investment on the transfer front.

The expected fallout is imaginable now Napoli have been dumped out of Europe's premier club competition by their Spanish counterparts. Missing out on almost €40m in revenue will likely see the period of austerity continue within the Castel Volturno headquarters. Could Napoli's season have already failed before it begun proper? Perish the thought, says Coach Rafael Benitez.

Having brought in no fewer than 14 different players, overhauling the side's way of playing and then winning the Coppa Italia – all in his first year – Benitez is now eyeing a first League title since he led Valencia to Liga victory ahead of Barcelona and Real Madrid a full decade ago. Too long, for a Coach of his stature. The Spaniard admitted Juventus and Roma remain favourites for the Scudetto, but warns that his men will be ready to punish any slips their competitors make. Recently boosted by the astute signings of Kalidou Koulibaly and Michu, Napoli are also expected to honour the Europa League, where they progressed to the round of 16 last term.

After a short hiatus, capping a return to Europe in that tournament are Inter. The Nerazzurri are in after easily disposing of Icelanders Stjarnan. Back home, Walter Mazzarri's side are also out to prove they are a proposition to be taken seriously at home. Arriving to reduce the gap from the top is ex-Manchester United captain Nemanja Vidic and Chile's World Cup 2014 star, Gary 'Pitbull' Medel. But the real triumph of patron Erick Thohir's first summer at the head lies in retaining the services of Juan Jesus, Mateo Kovacic and Mauro Icardi. The core of promising youngsters prove vital in ensuring continuity, as the last members of Inter's 2010 Treble-winning squad pass on the baton this summer.

A campaign for Inter's startlets as the San Siro outfit's absolute protagonists beckons as Mazzarri targets a European berth again this term. But a host of other ambitious sides led by Fiorentina aren't prepared to make such a watershed moment come easier. Vincenzo Montella's voracious Viola will come tearing out of the blocks after enduring two years of wretched luck with injuries, seeing first Champions League qualification cruelly elude them in 2013, before being cleanly dispatched by Napoli in the latest Coppa Italia Final. Amidst the haunting memories of lost opportunities, Montella will consider being able to field a fit-again strike pairing of Giuseppe Rossi and Mario Gomez as a small but still significant victory. Lazio, Torino and Parma follow closely on Fiorentina's trail aiming to use the first opportunity to upset the status quo on the peninsula too.





ATALANTA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	3.5
Attack	3.0
OVERALL	3.2

The loss of Giacomo Bonaventura on deadline day was a blow, but led by proven Coach Stefano Colantuono and with some smart recruits, Atalanta can aim for another season of consolidation. Luca Persico reports

After a summer of tinkering and redevelopment, Atalanta's campaign took an unwelcome twist with the loss of Giacomo Bonaventura to Milan on deadline day. The 25-year-old, who made over 100 appearances for the club and came through the youth system, earned La Dea €5m, but his creativity and moments of genius will be missed. Former Catania winger Alejandro Gomez – brought in as a replacement from Metalist Kharkiv – should ease the loss of Bonaventura and ensure Stefano Colantuono's side have another respectable campaign.

The additions of Giuseppe Biava, who finally gets to play for his hometown club, Yohan Benalouane, Nicolo Cherubin and Boukary Drame will help improve a defence that conceded 51 goals last term, while Richmond Boakye and Rolando Bianchi will support German Denis at the other end.

With the sale of Marko Livaja to Rubin Kazan, Atalanta ended the summer with a net profit of almost €10m. Despite key sales, Colantuono arguably has a stronger squad at his disposal and will be expected to produce a strong campaign. For President Antonio Percassi, however, the aim is simply to avoid the drop. "We are thinking about staying up," stated the owner. "I don't want to hear talk of the Europa League."

Those suggestions of qualifying for Europe are perhaps a little far-fetched, but if youngsters Daniele Baselli, Davide Zappacosta and Marco Sportiello can step up – the latter is set to replace the excellent Andrea Consigli – then Atalanta may just surprise and sneak into the top 10. 🍷



Atalanta's players and staff members celebrate their second goal against AC Milan during their Italian Serie A soccer match at Atleti Azzurri d'Italia stadium in Bergamo May 11, 2014

LAST SEASON

Atalanta had a strong campaign that saw them temporarily flirt with Europa League qualification. Fired by the goals of German Denis – he netted 13 times – La Dea ultimately finished 11th which was their highest placing since the 2008-09 season. A 3-0 victory over Napoli was a real highlight too.

TALKING TACTICS

Colantuono likes to stick to his preferred 4-4-1-1, with Maxi Moralez supporting Denis, but last season he occasionally operated with a 4-3-3, 4-4-2 and even used a back three at times.



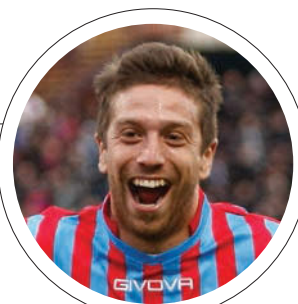
THE COACH STEFANO COLANTUONO

The 51-year-old tactician is entering his fifth consecutive season at Atalanta. After a mixed first spell at the club between 2005 and 2007, he returned in June 2010 to lead them back into Serie A and has kept them up ever since. His aim this term will be to consolidate once more.



CLUB LEGEND CRISTIANO DONI

The Rome native was first brought to the club in July 1998 from Brescia and went on to score 104 goals in 303 appearances across two spells. An attacking midfielder by trade, he was capped seven times by Italy and went to the 2002 World Cup, but his career ended prematurely in August 2011, with a 42-month ban for an alleged role in match-fixing.



THE NEW RECRUIT ALEJANDRO GOMEZ

The diminutive former Argentina Under-20 international has been given the task of replacing Giacomo Bonaventura. Signed for a reported fee of €5m from Metalist Kharkiv, 'Papu' Gomez comes with a strong reputation from his three-year spell at Catania. His trickery, pace and clever combinations with those around him should quickly endear him to the tifosi.



THE HOT PROSPECT DANIELE BASELLI

Baselli broke into the Atalanta first-team last season and went on to make 31 appearances. Already 22, the Brescia native is perhaps a late developer and had to show his worth in a co-ownership agreement at Cittadella before being brought back to Atalanta for €800,000. His neat passing and composed play attracted interest from Internazionale over the summer.



THE GOAL MACHINE GERMAN DENIS

Denis may divide opinion, but his return of 44 goals in 111 appearances has propelled Atalanta over the last three seasons. Initially signed on loan from Udinese, Atalanta parted with €5m to net him permanently in July 2012. Now 32, the responsibility on the veteran will be eased by the arrival of Boakye and Bianchi.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Another year of consolidation would be seen as a good campaign for Atalanta, though a first top 10 finish since the 2007-08 campaign may not be beyond them. With their strong home form, Colantuono's men will hope to upset some of the more illustrious sides, while a clutch of youngsters look ready to emerge.

CLUB NICKNAMES

La Dea, Nerazzurri, Orobici

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population) Bergamo (118,720)

Founded 1907

President Antonio Percassi

Club address Corso Europa, 46 - Zingonia
Ciserano - 24040

Training HQ Centro Sportivo Bortolotti
Corso Europa, Zingonia

Team strip Black & Blue striped shirts,
black shorts & socks

Club sponsor Suisse Gas - Konica Minolta

Kit sponsor Nike

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian Cristiano Doni - 7

Biggest signing Gianni Comandini - £8m,
Milan (2001)

Biggest sale Ivan Pelizzoli - £10m,
Roma (2001)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	20 [relegated]
2005-06	Serie B	1st [promoted]
2006-07	Serie A	8th
2007-08	Serie A	9th
2008-09	Serie A	11th
2009-10	Serie A	18th [relegated]
2010-11	Serie B	1st [promoted]
2011-12	Serie A	12th
2012-13	Serie A	15th
2013-14	Serie A	11th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 1808 | Wins 515 | Draws 591 | Loss 702
For 1924 | Against 2361 | Goal Diff -437 | Pts 1619

SERIE A RECORDS

	Debut
Top-flight campaigns	54
Best finish	5 th (1948)
Most appearances	Stefano Angelieri - 281
All-time top scorer	Cristiano Doni - 69
Season's top scorer	Filippo Inzaghi - 24 (96-97)
Most/least points	50 (06-07 & 13-14) / 16 (37-38)
Biggest home win	7-1 v Triestina (51-52)
Biggest home defeat	1-7 v Fiorentina (63-64)
Biggest away win	6-2 v Bologna (49-50)
Biggest away defeat	1-9 v Torino (41-42)
Most/least wins	17 (49-50) / 4 (37/38)
Most/least defeats	21 (09-10) / 7 (84-85)
Most/least goals	66 (49-50) / 16 (72-73)
Most/least conceded	69 (50-51) / 26 (71-72)

QUESTION TIME WITH... STEFANO COLANTUONO

This will be your seventh season with Atalanta. Does that affect your motivation?

"My approach to a new season is very simple - I treat it like it is a new adventure, like it is my first year here. There is a great desire to work hard and do well within the squad, we all want to give our all to reach our objective. The Italian championship remains very tough."

What will Atalanta be fighting for in 2014-15?

"Our objective for the season is to reach the 40 point mark and then perhaps gift our fans a little bit more. But we don't like to talk here, we like to act."

What are your thoughts on the squad you have this term?

"There is a good backbone to the side here. Some players may have left, but this squad is certainly not lacking in mentality and a spirit of sacrifice. I have a good mix of experience and youth. I'd like to see us perform as we did last season."

How do you think the Scudetto race will pan out?

"I still think Juventus are the team to beat, but Roma have moved closer even if they'll be hampered by the commitments of the Champions League. Then there is Napoli, Fiorentina, Milan, Inter and Lazio..."



ITALIAN CAPS :: DONI (7)



TOP SCORER :: INZAGHI (24)

BIGGEST SALE :: IVAN PELIZZOLI - £10m, Roma (2001)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO ATLETI AZZURRI D'ITALIA

Initially opened in 1928 at the Stadio Mario Brumana, the Stadio Atleti Azzurri d'Italia is one of Serie A's oldest stadiums. Plans to renovate it or build an alternative venue elsewhere have yet to be formalised, though for Atalanta and AlbinoLeffe, who share the ground, it's a stadium that creates an intimidating atmosphere.



Pitch dimensions: 120m x 70m
Capacity: 26,642



FORMATION
4-4-1-1

TEAM LINE-UP

Sportiello



Zappacosta



Biava



Stendardo



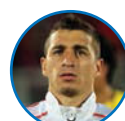
Dramé



Estigarribia



Cigarini



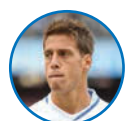
Carmona



Gómez



Moralez



Denis



CAGLIARI

5 STAR RATING

Defence	2.5
Midfield	2.5
Attack	3.0
OVERALL	2.6

Survival is the priority but a new owner and new Coach will oversee a rejuvenated squad with future ambition. Mark Siglioccolo ponders whether foundations can be laid this term

Massimo Cellino sold up and bought English Championship club Leeds United after 22 years as President of Cagliari. His replacement Tommaso Giulini finally brought closure to the stadium situation by completing the renovation of the Stadio Sant'Elia which caused so much disruption to the Rossoblu last season. Mauricio Pinilla has switched to Genoa and Cagliari's top scorer from last season will be missed along with Davide Astori, Nene, Vlada Avramov and Gabriele Perico. Giulini recently announced at the Asseminello training ground that Victor Ibarbo's contract had been extended to June 2017 and the Colombian enjoyed a decent World Cup last summer. Unfortunately, Cagliari medics diagnosed goalkeeper Manuel Almunia with Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, forcing the Spaniard to retire at the age of 37. The young Italian duo of 20-year-old Alessio Cragno and 23-year-old Simone Colombi have been brought in and for now it seems as if the elder of the two has been handed the gloves. Parma's Luca Ceppitelli and Inter's Simone Benedetti are set to rejuvenate the defence, whilst exciting Bologna Primavera starlet Alessandro Capello is joined by fellow forwards Samuele Longo, Caio Rangel and Diego Farias, all of whom are aged 18-24. Armed with an average age squad of 23.28, new Coach Zdenek Zeman will seek a Cagliari top 10 finish for the first time since 2008-09, although survival is their main objective. This is a team for the future but they will quickly need to prove themselves – and don't be surprised if Antonio Conte appears in the stands... 🍷



Genoa's Sébastien De Maio celebrates with his teammates after scoring the first goal of the Italian Serie A soccer match between CFC Genoa and Cagliari Calcio at Luigi Ferraris Stadium in Genova, 19 April 2014

LAST SEASON

It was a campaign to forget with the stadium debacle, poor and inconsistent results, as well as a managerial merry-go-round culminating in a shambolic campaign. Ivo Pulga and Diego Lopez bizarrely traded the managerial hot-seat and Massimo Cellino's proposed Leeds United takeover proved distracting as the club eventually dodged the drop by seven points.

TALKING TACTICS

Renowned for deploying an attacking 4-3-3 formation throughout his career, do not expect a change of tack from Zeman now. It should promise entertainment – providing you are a neutral.



THE COACH ZDENEK ZEMAN

The Serie A stalwart has a reputation that precedes him of all out attacking football. His sides historically play 4-3-3 and although they are rarely boring, it does not always produce the best results. If his youngsters can gel quickly then they could surprise, but realistically they, and he, will need time.



CLUB LEGEND GIGI RIVA

The Italian goal machine was truly one of a kind, the like of which has not been seen in the peninsula since. Cagliari reaped the rewards of his 14 years spent at the club, providing 164 goals in 315 appearances and leading them to their only Scudetto in 1969-70.



THE NEW RECRUIT LUCA CEPPITELLI

It seems as if the 24-year-old centre-back is set to partner the more experienced Luca Rossetti, whom could reach a century of appearances for the club this season. Ceppitelli could have a pivotal season in his career and the pair have the potential to form a solid defensive partnership.



THE HOT PROSPECT ALESSANDRO CAPELLO

The 18-year-old may be quite a gamble but his decent Primavera goal scoring exploits are enough to suggest that he may just be ready to explode in Serie A. With 20 goals in 57 appearances for Bologna and Inter's youth sides, at just €1m he should be a steal.



THE DANGER MAN MARCO SAU

With Pinilla gone, Sau is now the club's focal point. His record for Cagliari is just under one goal every three games and with the new tactics instilled he is surely bound to score plenty more this season. The 26-year-old Italian could also find himself on Conte's radar to add to his one Azzurri cap.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Cagliari will be aiming, as ever, to extend their now 10-year long stay in Italy's top flight – anything more will be an added bonus. Last season the Sardinians finished just one place outside the top 10 so they may fancy a shot at making the top half this campaign – something they have only achieved once since returning to Serie A in 2004.

**CLUB NICKNAMES**

The Rossoblu, Gli Isolani, I Sardi

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population) Cagliari (154,019)

Founded 1920

President Tommaso Giulinì

Club address Viale La Playa, 15 09123 Cagliari

Training HQ Centro Sportivo Ercole Cellino, Località Sa Rulna, Assemini

Team strip Red & blue, blue shorts & socks

Club sponsor Regione Sardegna

Kit sponsor Kappa

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian Luigi Riva – 42

Biggest signing Patrick M'Boma – £5.1m, Gamba Osaka (1998)

Biggest sale David Suazo – £10m, Inter (2007)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	12th
2005-06	Serie A	14th
2006-07	Serie A	16th
2007-08	Serie A	14th
2008-09	Serie A	9th
2009-10	Serie A	16th
2010-11	Serie A	14th
2011-12	Serie A	15th
2012-13	Serie A	11th
2013-14	Serie A	16th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 1178 | Wins 349 | Draws 404 | Loss 425
For 1284 | Against 1418 | Goal Diff -134 | Pts 1102

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1965-66
Top-flight campaigns	35
Best finish	Winners 1 (1970)
Most appearances	Claudio Nene – 311
All-time top scorer	Luigi Riva – 156
Season's top scorer	David Suazo – 22 (05-06)
Most/least points	53 (08-09) / 19 (75-76)
Biggest home win	5-0 v Sampdoria (98-99)
Biggest home defeat	0-4 v Milan (70-71)
Biggest away win	6-1 v Varese (68-69)
Biggest away defeat	0-5 v Sampdoria (94-95) & v Napoli (74-75)
Most/least wins	17 (69-70) / 3 (99-00)
Most/least defeats	18 (99-00) / 2 (69-70)
Most/least goals	56 (09-10) / 22 (74-75)
Most/least conceded	62 (96-97) / 11 (69-70)

QUESTION TIME WITH... ZDENEK ZEMAN

With a new look side, is the team prepared for the season ahead after a mixed pre-season?

"We have 15 new players that should be easy to insert and we are trying to play differently. Was the pre-season negative? No, it is in line with my expectations, I'm used to doing long preparation. I would not call them problems, but the road is long and it will be hard work."

Are you less defensively frail than you were last term? Captain Daniele Conti turned 35 in January...

"We have improved on the physical side, but tactically we have to grow and during games we must adapt to new things. Conti? He can give more order and disciplines the team."

The shock retirement of Manuel Almunia leaves you with two new young goalkeepers...

"The squad is broad and balanced. Colombi and Cragno? If they play, I do not have a first choice goalkeeper."

The Stadio Sant'Elia is finally reopen...

"Hopefully there will be so many people that want to encourages us, understand that we are at the beginning and give us a hand to grow...but it is up to us to conquer the audience."

What is your view on the FIGC situation?

"There are problems and I hope that the Federation resolve them. Antonio Conte, however, was the right choice as Coach for the national side, he has shown in recent years that he is the best."



ITALIAN CAPS :: RIVA (42)



MOST APPS :: NENE (311)

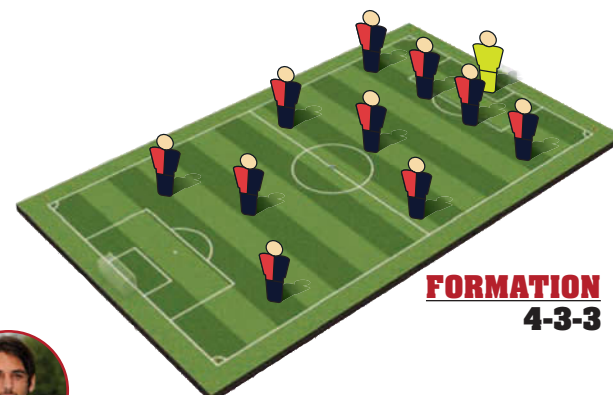
BIGGEST SALE :: DAVID SUAZO - £10m, Inter (2007)

STADIUM INFO :: SANT'ELIA

New and improved following an epic saga, new owner and filmmaker Tommaso Giulinì has finally overseen the stadium expansion which threatened to never be completed. With a capacity of 12,000, the new President will hope that the Rossoblu faithful will fill it up for home games and spur on their team.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 12,000



FORMATION
4-3-3

TEAM LINE-UP

Colombi



Pisano



Ceppitelli



Capuano



Avelar



Capello



Crisetig



Ekdal



Farias



Sau



Cossu



CESENA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	1.5
Midfield	1.5
Attack	1.5
OVERALL	1.5

While the locals may warmly embrace their return to the top flight, it seems inevitable that Cesena will once again be playing out a Serie A season fending for their lives. **Rossella Marrai** writes

Since Cesena reported for pre-season training at Acquapartita on July 19, there has been an air of positivity around the newly-promoted club upon their return to Serie A after a two-year absence. And why wouldn't there be? The Seahorses managed to overcome financial difficulties to swim their way back to the leading Division, and their pre-season results have also been a reason to rejoice. A goalless draw to Massimiliano Allegri's Juventus side was always going to bode well in terms of a confidence booster for the team, and that was evident when victories over Santarcangelo, Rayo and Imolese saw them go unbeaten in six friendly matches. On top of that, Guido Marilungo and Alejandro Rodriguez's lethal attacking combination has rattled opposition defences, while their own back-line has remained watertight. That was surprising considering the club's scoring problems last term in Serie B. Despite all of that, there is an underlying fear that lingers just below the shoreline – and that fear is the uncertainty of the unknown. Even with their impressive summer form, that has seen little to no money splurged in the market, the team is not strong enough to contend for nothing more than a scrappy finish for survival. Nicola Leali is a promising talent in goal, but his lack of know-how is a risk to put forth against the big guns, while Luigi Giorgi, Riccardo Cazzola and Marilungo are all previous Serie A misfits from different clubs. Coach Pierpaolo Bisoli may have pulled miracles in the past with the Cavallucci Marini, where he has extracted the best out of them, but this year a miracle seems that extra bit further out of his reach. 🍷



Cesena players celebrate a return to Serie A... but for how long?

LAST SEASON

Having resolved a number of worrying financial issues, Cesena started the campaign well and quickly underlined their promotion credentials. Although form dipped and soared, they finished fourth to secure a play-off spot. Wins over Modena and Latina ensured their fifth promotion to the top flight.

TALKING TACTICS

Bisoli looks like he wants to play with a 4-3-3, but Brienza does offer him a touch of tactical versatility so don't be surprised to see a 4-3-1-2 or even a 4-4-1-1 at times.



THE COACH PIERPAOLO BISOLI

Currently in his second stint at Cesena, Bisoli has a fresh new squad upon the club's return to Serie A. His biggest task will be building a team fit for survival and ensuring that they manage to preserve their top-flight status for another term. His experience in trying to stave off relegation will be handy.



CLUB LEGEND DARIO HUBNER

A goal machine of the provinces, Hubner spent five productive seasons at Cesena where he netted 77 goals in just 166 games. Achieved double figures in every Serie B campaign with the club, he was actually the Division's top scorer in 1995-96 while at the Manuzzi. He would later become top-flight Capocannoniere for Piacenza in 2002.



THE NEW RECRUIT FRANCO BRIENZA

In order to survive their return to Serie A, management knew that an experienced player was needed and Franco Brienza fits the bill. Arriving at the club with years of know-how at Palermo and Siena, the veteran striker is guaranteed to supply calmness, passion and, of course, goals.



THE HOT PROSPECT NICOLA LEALI

The 21-year-old goalkeeper, owned by Juventus, is probably one of the best players in this year's Cesena side and he is expected to make his mark in the top-flight with the Seahorses. Standing at 6'2", Leali is quick off his line, drops to the floor with ease and can pull off some dramatic aerial saves.



THE ENIGMA GUIDO MARILUNGO

A talented attacking player whose career has undoubtedly been put on hold thanks to a series of injuries. Formerly of Sampdoria, Lecce and Atalanta, the 25-year-old is hoping he can stay fit in order to showcase the potential which saw him capped at Italian Under-21 level.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

One word – survival. Forget about everything else, the only thing on Cesena's mind is to maintain their top-flight status for at least one more campaign.

**CLUB NICKNAMES**

Bianconeri, Cavallucci Marini, Seahorses

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Cesena (99, 488)
Founded	1940
President	Giorgio Lugaresi
Club address	Corso Sozzi, 5, Cesena
Training HQ	Malles Venosta
Team strip	White shirts with black trim, black shorts and white socks
Club sponsor	TechnoGym
Kit sponsor	Adidas

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Ruggiero Rizzitelli – 3
Biggest signing	Massimo Ciocci - £1m, Inter (1990)
Biggest sale	Ruggiero Rizzitelli - £2.8m, Roma (1988)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie B	16th
2005-06	Serie B	6th
2006-07	Serie B	16th
2007-08	Serie B	22nd
2008-09	Lega Pro	1st
2009-10	Serie B	2nd
2010-11	Serie A	15th
2011-12	Serie A	20th
2012-13	Serie B	14th
2013-14	Serie B	4th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 388 | **Wins** 76 | **Draws** 147 | **Loss** 165
For 328 | **Against** 497 | **Goal Diff** -169 | **Pts** 299

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1973-74
Top-flight campaigns	12
Best finish	6th (75-76)
Most appearances	Giampiero Ceccarelli – 520
All-time top scorer	Dario Hubner – 77
Season's top scorer	Massimo Ciocci – 13 (90-91)
Most/least points	43 (10-11) / 14 (76-77)
Biggest home win	4-0 v Roma (76-77) & v Lecce (89-90)
Biggest home defeat	1-5 v Inter (90-91)
Biggest away win	2-0 v Foggia (76-77)
Biggest away defeat	1-6 v Juventus (81-82)
Most/least wins	11 (10-11) / 3 (76-77)
Most/least defeats	19 (76-77) / 7 (75-76)
Most/least goals	39 (75-76) / 22 (76-77 / 82-83)
Most/least conceded	58 (90-91) / 28 (73-74)

QUESTION TIME WITH... PIERPAOLO BISOLI

Are you happy with the squad which the club has given you for 2014-15?

"I have so many certainties in my mind about this season. This is a fantastic squad and is the one which I wanted at my disposal. Even when things turn grey, I won't change my mind. I know that my team knows how to suffer, but they also know how to enjoy themselves on the pitch."

What are you asking from your team?

"I like the quality in our passing and our ball possession. What we do on the field of play is what we work on in training. The new players are settling in well and quickly."

You left Cesena after leading them to promotion in 2010, but now you have the chance in the top flight at the Manuzzi...

"It is a dream for me to boss Cesena in Serie A. Don't forget, I was working for Porretta in 2004..."

You'll have the experience of Franco Brienza this term...

"He has integrated well into the squad and he is someone with an important touch."



ITALIAN CAPS :: RIZZITELLI (3)



TOP SCORER :: HUBNER (77)

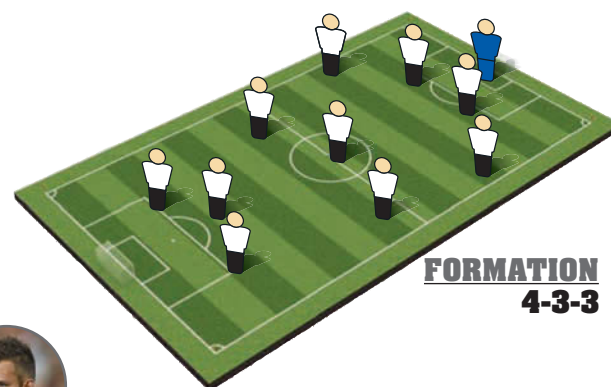
BIGGEST SIGNING :: MASSIMO CIOCCI - £1m, Inter (1990)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO DINO MANUZZI

Home to both Cesena and Serie D side ASD Romagna, the Stadio Dino Manuzzi became the first ground in Italy to stage a Serie A match on synthetic grass. It was also the first stadium in Europe to accommodate two 'Royal Box' structures in plexi-glass which are self-contained just behind the corner flags which can host up to 8 people.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 23,860



FORMATION
4-3-3

TEAM LINE-UP

Leali



Capelli



Volta



Lucchini



Renzetti



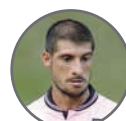
Zé Eduardo



Cascione



Coppola



Brienza



Marilungo



Defrel



CHIEVO VERONA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	2.0
Midfield	2.0
Attack	2.0
OVERALL	2.0

After narrowly escaping relegation last season, Chievo have kept faith with Eugenio Corini and significantly reinforced their squad. Tony Ciriello explores the new face of the Flying Donkeys

Chievo are one of the anomalies of Italian football. In spite of being the much smaller cousin of Hellas Verona, since 2001 Chievo have spent all but one season in Serie A and even qualified for the Champions League and UEFA Cup. Recent seasons, though, have seen the Gialloblu slip down the table and avoid relegation by smaller and smaller margins. Last season was closer than most before, and heading into the summer, they needed to rejuvenate the side. It appears that's exactly what President Luca Campedelli and Co have done. Above all, the club has stuck with former player and Coach Eugenio Corini, handing him a new contract early on, enabling him to have the whole summer to mould his team to his favoured style. That would appear to be a return to the expansive and exciting football that brought Chievo such success over a decade ago, with signings such as Mariano Izco, Maxi Lopez, Valter Birsa and Riccardo Meggiorini. These have been complemented by some seemingly shrewd acquisitions, with experienced defender Alessandro Gamberini from Napoli and emerging talent Cristiano Biraghi from Inter. Only time will tell if Chievo can reaffirm themselves as a competitive and secure fixture of Serie A football. Recent history says it's possible for underdogs like Chievo to compete with the Serie A goliaths. ♦



Chievo's players celebrate their relegation avoidance

LAST SEASON

A sluggish start to the season saw Eugenio Corini return to the hotseat in November, just a months after he was replaced by Giuseppe Sannino. Results did improve, but it was an uncomfortable end to the season given that they finished just four points above the drop zone.

TALKING TACTICS

Corini can play around a bit when it comes to tactics, but don't expect him to deviate away from his flat back-four. As a result, we'll probably see 4-3-2-1, 4-3-3 and even a 4-4-2.



THE COACH EUGENIO CORINI

Former player and captain Eugenio Corini holds a special place in the hearts of Chievo supporters, as he led them to promotion from Serie B and subsequently into Europe. He had the pedigree as a player, but it remains to be seen whether he can replicate his achievements as a tactician.



CLUB LEGEND LUCIANO

More than a decade after the passport scandal that revealed his true age, Luciano left last summer after turning down a contract extension. Now 38, Luciano was a symbol of Chievo's rise up the Divisions, joining from Bologna in 2000 and forming with Christian Manfredini the dynamic wing pair as Chievo reached the Champions League in 2006. Only Sergio Pellissier has made more Serie A appearances for the club.



THE NEW RECRUIT VALTER BIRSA

Birsa endured a tough spell at Milan, in and out of the team, but when he was on the pitch he showed himself to be a dynamic, attack minded player. He is still young at 28 and certainly has plenty more to contribute.



THE ENIGMA EZEQUIEL SCHELOTTO

Seemingly destined for stardom after winning a call-up to the Italian national squad and a move to Inter, things haven't exactly gone to plan for the Argentine-born wide player. Likened to former Juventus star Mauro Camoranesi, the 25-year-old needs to find some consistent form if he is to live up to his potential.



THE ENFORCER DARIO DAINELLI

Not the player he was in his Fiorentina heyday, but Dario Dainelli can still be crucial to Chievo. They will need every ounce of his experience in the centre of defence as the 35-year-old draws on the qualities that once made him an Italy international. Even if not a regular starter, Dainelli can offer plenty to Corini.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

When you are a club the size of Chievo, you don't want too much and you don't expect too much. Reaching the 40 points mark and surviving the drop is the only thing they'll be thinking about.

**CLUB NICKNAMES**

Gialloblu, Ceo, Mussi Volanti, Flying Donkeys

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Verona (264,475)
Founded	1929
President	Luca Campedelli
Club address	Via Galvani, 3 - 37138 Verona
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo Veronello, Via Veronello, 37010 Calmasino di Bardolino
Team strip	Yellow shirt with blue sleeves, yellow shorts, yellow socks with blue trim
Club sponsor	Paluani
Kit sponsor	Givova

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Simone Perrotta – 19
Biggest signing	Alberto Paloschi - €7m, Milan (2014)
Biggest sale	Amauri - €9m, Palermo (2006)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	15th
2005-06	Serie A	7th [4th after Calciopoli]
2006-07	Serie A	18th
2007-08	Serie B	1st
2008-09	Serie A	16th
2009-10	Serie A	14th
2010-11	Serie A	11th
2011-12	Serie A	10th
2012-13	Serie A	12th
2013-14	Serie A	16th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 444 | **Wins** 139 | **Draws** 130 | **Loss** 175
For 484 | **Against** 556 | **Goal Diff** -72 | **Pts** 408

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	2001-02
Top-flight campaigns	13
Best finish	5th (02)
Most appearances	Sergio Pellissier – 341
All-time top scorer	Sergio Pellissier – 86
Season's top scorer	Massimo Marazzina / Sergio Pellissier / Alberto Paloschi – 13 (01-02) / (05-06) & (08-09) / (13-14)
Most/least points	55 (02-03) / 38 (08-09)
Biggest home win	4-0 v Reggina (05-06)
Biggest home defeat	0-4 v Parma (02-03)
Biggest away win	3-0 v Piacenza (02-03) / Modena (03-04) / Lazio (08-09) / Brescia (11-12)
Biggest away defeat	0-5 v Roma (01-02)
Most/least wins	16 (02-03) / 8 (08-09)
Most/least defeats	17 (04-05, 06-07, 12-13) / 8 (01-02)
Most/least goals	57 (01-02) / 32 (04-05)
Most/least conceded	56 (03-04) / 39 (02-03)

**QUESTION TIME WITH...
EUGENIO CORINI**

Chievo decided to make a lot of changes to the squad during the summer...

"The idea was to change in order to create more motivation to the whole environment and the club did some great work for me. I have to thank the President and the sporting director as they did a fine job. I'm happy with the transfers and now it is a matter of turning this squad into a team."

The squad has changed, but have your targets?

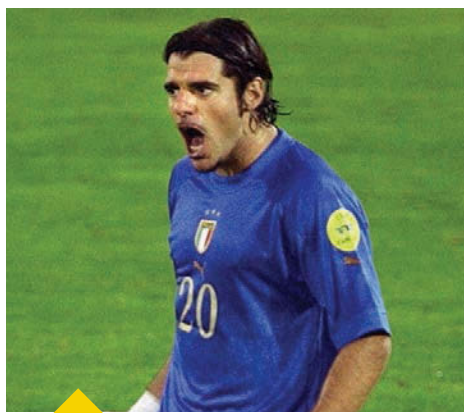
"The desire of this club is to follow the same road we have gone down in the past, but by using different players. The fresh faces should provide a hunger and energy, while they will give me two or three alternatives when it comes to how we shape up."

When do you expect the fans to see results?

"First of all, I expect the fans to give us total support because we've made so many changes that we require the faith of the tifosi. We can't be alone as a squad on this journey, we will need the backing of the fans and those who love Chievo too."

How did pre-season go for you?

"We worked extremely hard and I'm very happy with what we were able to do in those two months. We worked really hard on the athletic side of things, while we also looked closely at the key principles of my tactics."



ITALIAN CAPS :: PERROTTA (19)



TOP SCORER :: PELLISSIER (85)

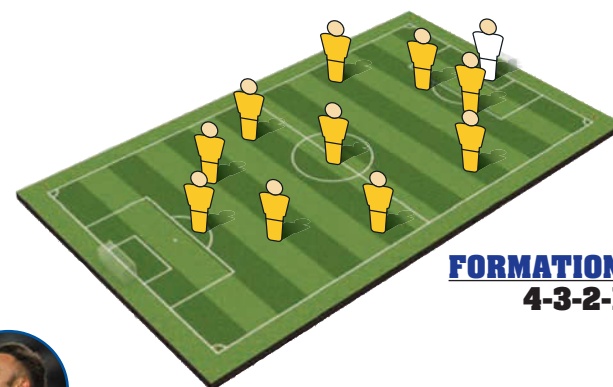
BIGGEST SALE :: AMAURI - €9m, Palermo (2006)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO BENTEGODI

Shared with neighbours Hellas Verona, the Bentegodi was redeveloped for Italia '90, where it hosted games played in Group E between Spain, Belgium, Uruguay and South Korea and the last 16 tie between Spain and Yugoslavia. Rarely filled by Chievo, their fans take the Curva Sud and create a friendly atmosphere.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 67m
Capacity: 38,402



**FORMATION
4-3-2-1**

TEAM LINE-UP

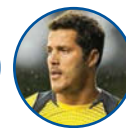
Bardi



Frey



Dainelli



Cesar



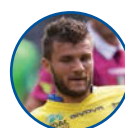
Biraghi



Izco



Mangani



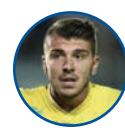
Hetemaj



Schelotto



Birsà



Paloschi



EMPOLI

5 STAR RATING

Defence	2.5
Midfield	2.5
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	2.8

Last season's Serie B runners up are back in Italy's top flight for the first time in seven years. **Alasdair Mackenzie** expects a tough relegation battle for the Tuscans

After finishing second to Palermo in Serie B last season, Empoli are back in Serie A for the first time since 2007-08. Maurizio Sarri has transformed a club that was languishing at the bottom end of Italy's second tier when he arrived, taking them to the play-off Final in his first season before last year's promotion. Sarri's success has been built upon one of Italian football's most experienced strike partnerships in Francesco Tavano and Massimo Maccarone. Club legend Tavano banged in 22 goals last season and Maccarone 15, a combined 37 League goals that made up over 60 per cent of Empoli's tally for the entire season. It is this veteran firepower – they have a combined age of 69 – that the Azzurri will again be relying on to keep them in the top flight. With limited resources available to bring in new players, the Tuscans have nevertheless managed to make some astute acquisitions over the summer. The Italian Under-21 captain Matteo Bianchetti joins from Verona to add some fresh legs in defence, Uruguay Under-20 international Diego Laxalt has come on loan from Inter to provide some attacking verve and a deadline day deal was struck for the arrival of Polish international Piotr Zielinski from Udinese, also on loan. This blend of youth and experience could make Empoli a tricky opponent and will make many fans confident of avoiding the drop. Although very few amongst the Azzurri faithful will be expecting anything better than a relegation battle, survival does look achievable and would lay down a great foundation to reassert the club's position as a top-flight team. ◆



Francesco Tavano's goal saw Empoli seal a Serie B second place behind Palermo with a 2-0 win at home to Pescara.

LAST SEASON

As Palermo ran away with last season's Serie B title, Empoli finished runners up with a comfortable four point cushion. This was largely thanks to the goals of top scorer Francesco Tavano and his partner in crime Massimo Maccarone – and just reward for the good work done by Maurizio Sarri since his arrival at the club in 2012.

TALKING TACTICS

Sarri uses a 4-3-1-2 and he is likely to persist with the formation this year. Tavano and Maccarone provide the firepower and Laxalt could operate in a number of roles behind them.



THE COACH MAURIZIO SARRI

Sarri took charge of the Tuscan club at the beginning of the 2012-13 campaign and led them to fourth place and a play-off Final against Tuscan rivals Livorno. Despite their narrow defeat over the two legs, Sarri's impact was enormous given that Empoli had finished 18th the season before. The good work continued a season later.



CLUB ICON FRANCESCO TAVANO

Tavano's importance to Empoli is perhaps only comparable to that of Antonio Di Natale at Udinese. A true club icon, he is Empoli's all-time top scorer and has been with the club through good times and bad. The 35-year-old is now in his ninth season with the Azzurri and has so far scored a remarkable 113 goals in 269 appearances.



THE HOT PROSPECT DIEGO LAXALT

Laxalt remains an unproven talent, but the 21-year-old winger could enjoy the kind of game time at Empoli that was not possible for him at Inter. Despite failing to make an impact during his loan at Bologna last season, he is an Uruguay Under-20 international and could provide the ammunition for Maccarone and Tavano.



THE GOAL MACHINE MASSIMO MACCARONE

The name will be familiar to followers of both Italian and English football, given the bald striker's spell at Middlesbrough. Scorer of 15 goals last season, Maccarone is a deadly finisher who also chips in with regular assists and, alongside Tavano, he will surely provide more headaches for Serie A defences this season, despite his advancing years.



MINISTER OF DEFENCE MATTEO BIANCHETTI

The Italian Under-21 captain is another on-loan starlet who will benefit from more regular playing time. A strong, tall centre-back, Bianchetti will have to work hard in order to find a place in Sarri's starting XI.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Survival. Anything else would be a massive achievement for Empoli, who on paper have one of the weakest squads in the League. However, with an intelligent Coach in Sarri and a good blend of youth and experience, the Azzurri may well achieve their objective.

**CLUB NICKNAME**

Gli Azzurri

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Empoli (48,086)
Founded	1920
President	Fabrizio Corsi
Club address	Piazza Matteotti, 29 50053 Empoli
Training HQ	Campo Sussidiario, Via della Maratona, Empoli
Team strip	Blue shirts, blue shorts, blue socks
Club sponsor	NGM Mobile – Computer Gross
Kit sponsor	Royal

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Antonio Di Natale – 4
Biggest signing	Nicola Pozzi – £2.2m, Milan (2006)
Biggest sale	Massimo Maccarone – £8.4m, Middlesbrough (2002)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie B	1st
2005-06	Serie A	7th
2006-07	Serie A	7th
2007-08	Serie A	18th
2008-09	Serie B	5th
2009-10	Serie B	10th
2010-11	Serie B	9th
2011-12	Serie B	18th
2012-13	Serie B	4th
2013-14	Serie B	2nd

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 310 | Wins 80 | Draws 84 | Loss 146
For 289 | Against 440 | Goal Diff -151 | Pts 237

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1986-87
Top-flight campaigns	10
Best finish	7th (06-07)
Most appearances	Antonio Busce – 164
All-time top scorer	Francesco Tavano – 42
Season's top scorer	Francesco Tavano – 19 (05-06/06-07)
Most/least points	54 (06-07) / 20 (87-88/98-99)
Biggest home win	5-0 v Napoli (97-98)
Biggest home defeat	0-4 v Juventus (05-06)
Biggest away win	3-0 v Reggina (05-06)
Biggest away defeat	1-5 v Cagliari & Inter (98-99) & Juventus (03-04)
Most/least wins	14 (06-07) / 4 (98-99)
Most/least defeats	20 (98-99/07-08) / 11 (87-88)
Most/least goals	50 (97-98) / 13 (86-87)
Most/least conceded	63 (98-99) / 30 (87-88)

QUESTION TIME WITH... MAURIZIO SARRI

The season is underway, do you feel Empoli are ready?

"This is a moment in which doubts outweigh certainties and in which there are both positive and negative aspects. If the motivation and joy of playing in Serie A prevails I believe we can deliver a high level performance. On the other hand, if the fear of not being good enough emerges we will play anxiously. It definitely won't be a normal approach to begin with."

Some might say your side don't have the required quality to compete at this level...

"We have our own way of playing and our own ideas to take us forward. Now we need to gain an understanding of the League and demonstrate that, even in the presence of stronger opponents, we can have our own say in the outcome."

This is your first season in Serie A as a Coach...

"I am happy about the route I've taken, my background and I believe that everything that I have done so far has developed me and helps me."



ITALIAN CAPS :: DI NATALE (4)

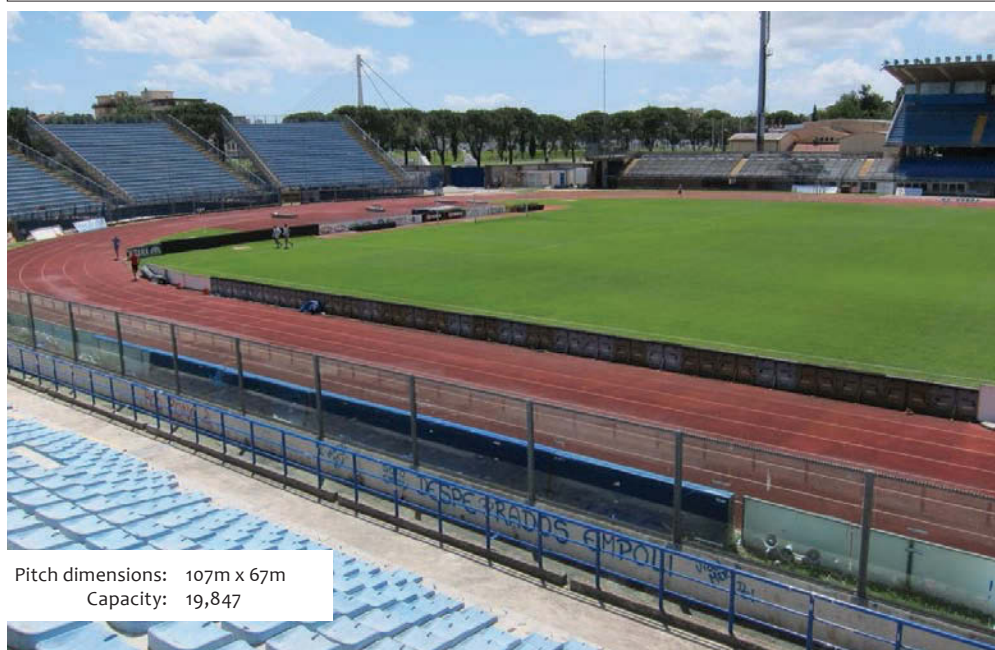


MOST APPS :: BUSCE (164)

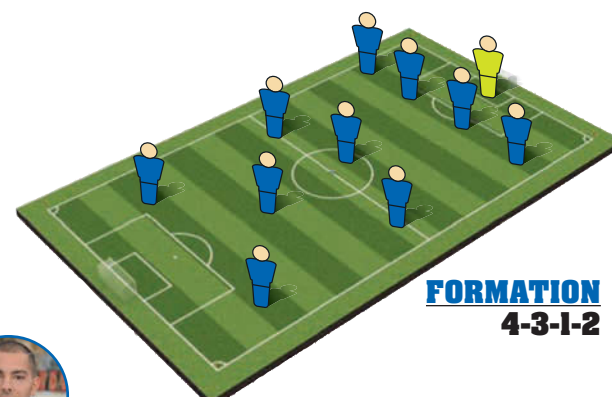
BIGGEST SALE :: MASSIMO MACCARONE – £8.4M, MIDDLESBROUGH (2002)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO CARLO CASTELLANI

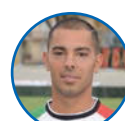
Opened in 1965, the Stadio Carlo Castellani has been home to Empoli ever since. Originally only consisting of one stand, the stadium has gradually expanded over the years and various renovations have taken place. The Curva Maratona is home to the Ultras and provides a vibrant atmosphere.



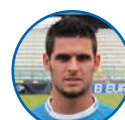
Pitch dimensions: 107m x 67m
Capacity: 19,847



**FORMATION
4-3-1-2**

TEAM LINE-UP

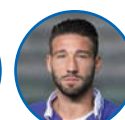
Sepe



Laurini



Croce



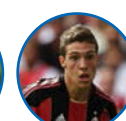
Tonelli



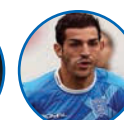
Vecino



Rugani



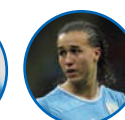
Verdi



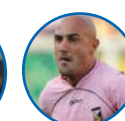
Hysaj



Tavano



Laxalt



Maccarone



FIorentina

5 STAR RATING

Defence	2.5
Midfield	3.5
Attack	4.5
OVERALL	3.5

Fiorentina have signalled their intent via a series of impressive pre-season performances. With a deadly frontline to count on, **Jeremy Lim** thinks they can deliver this time

It could be the way Fiorentina pulled off the major coup of keeping Juan Cuadrado for an additional year. It might also be due to their impressive record over the course of the summer's friendlies, one which involved them coming from behind to claim the scalp of European champions Real Madrid. Or it could be the sight of a fit-again Mario Gomez leading the line. Regardless of the reason, Fiorentina's season has been greeted with enthusiasm by the club faithful, as they tend to be these days. Since Vincenzo Montella took over, there has been the sense that the resurgent Viola are on the brink of achieving something truly special. Mind you, they haven't gotten there yet. Having just missed out on Champions League qualification in the previous two campaigns, as well as succumbing to Napoli in the Coppa Italia, Montella is still a few more brush strokes away from completing his Florentine masterpiece. But the Viola's odyssey to sever away their nearly-men tag could be taking final form. Confirming themselves as the attractive proposition they have always been during pre-season but successfully marrying style with results this time, Fiorentina also proved themselves to be stubborn, solid sorts, exhibiting a steel that had earlier been missing from their endeavours. The added quality of Marko Marin plus Federico Bernardeschi's youthful promise suggests they will have the depth and pedigree to compete, while two-time Premier League winner Micah Richards' arrival means the backline will be made up of sterner stuff. Montella's true trump card lies in the prospective forward line he can deploy. In Cuadrado, Gomez and Italy frontman Giuseppe Rossi lies abundant firepower to turn Fiorentina into heavyweights against anyone. With the Artemio Franchi crowd rightfully anticipating the start of the new season, Montella could have nailed the recipe for success at last. ♦



Staying in Florence: Italian international Rossi will be sticking with Vincenzo Montella's side despite rumours of a move to Liverpool FC

LAST SEASON

The 2013-14 campaign saw Fiorentina consolidate their transformation into one of Italy's main contenders, the standout game being an enthralling home win versus Juventus – their first since December 1998. Fiorentina took part in a running battle for the Champions League qualification spots but ended up missing out again. The Artemio Franchi side were also despatched in the Coppa Italia Final by Napoli.

TALKING TACTICS

There may be occasional gaps left at the back, but that won't stop Fiorentina from lining up in an offensive 4-3-3 or 4-3-1-2 to take advantage of their potent attack.



THE COACH VINCENZO MONTELLA

In three years at the helm Montella has moved Fiorentina from ambling to ambitious. The 40-year-old has given the team an identity, emphasising possession and artistry. Montella's side effortlessly dictates play, while lately showing an increasing knack for stopping and countering their opponents' moves too – a vital trait if they are to achieve a milestone this season under their up-and-coming boss.



CLUB LEGEND GABRIEL BATISTUTA

It was not just the 151 goals Gabriel Batistuta scored in 243 Serie A appearances for Fiorentina that endeared him to the club's fans. 'Batigol' had also gone down to Serie B with his teammates, only to help them secure immediate promotion prior to enjoying his best years in Florence between 1994 and 1996, when he first finished Capocannoniere before firing the side to the Coppa Italia and Supercoppa Italiana. Fiorentina fans recognised his contributions by erecting a life-sized bronze statue of the striker.



THE PLAYMAKER BORJA VALERO

Fiorentina are a team built around Borja Valero's ideas. The Spaniard is a creative force whose playmaking abilities mark him as an indispensable asset in the team's upward climb – a cause Valero has shown genuine and heartfelt affection for. That the former Real Madrid youth has added goals to his repertoire of skills just makes him more deadly to opponents.



THE DANGER MAN GIUSEPPE ROSSI

La Viola's very own Renaissance Man. Giuseppe Rossi had been frontrunner for the Capocannoniere award last season before injury cruelly cut his campaign short. With a point still to prove to Italy Coach Antonio Conte and indeed the watching world that he is down but not yet out – after going under the knife a fourth time in September – bet on 'Pepito' to turn up with even more goalscoring greed this season.



THE ENTERTAINER JUAN CUADRADO

Once a frightening prospect, Juan Cuadrado has now emerged as the genuine article. In fact, the real coup of Fiorentina's summer lay in keeping the fast and tricky winger at the Artemio Franchi, following the Colombian's excellent World Cup displays. The Viola will continue relying on the 26-year-old's flair and cutting edge to unlock defences, as he leaps into his prime.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Having repeatedly come so close to securing Champions League football, Fiorentina will ensure they are not left looking from the outside in for the third time running. Strong outings in the Europa League and Coppa Italia, in which they reached the Final last season, are not beyond them too.

CLUB NICKNAMES

Viola, I Gigliati

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Florence (377,207)
Founded	1926
President	Mario Cognini
Club address	Viale Manfredo Fanti 4, 50137, Florence
Training HQ	Campi Sussidiari Comunali, Viale Paoli, Florence
Team strip	Purple shirts, shorts and socks
Club sponsor	Mazda
Kit sponsor	Joma

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Giancarlo Antognoni – 73
Biggest signing	Mario Gomez – £13m, Bayern Munich (2013)
Biggest sale	Manuel Rui Costa – £27m, Milan (2001)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	16th
2005-06	Serie A	4th [9th after Calciopoli ruling]
2006-07	Serie A	6th
2007-08	Serie A	4th
2008-09	Serie A	4th
2009-10	Serie A	11th
2010-11	Serie A	9th
2011-12	Serie A	13th
2012-13	Serie A	4th
2013-14	Serie A	4th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2534 | Wins 1002 | Draws 777 | Loss 755
For 3499 | Against 2900 | Goal Diff +599 | Pts 2766

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1931-32
Top-flight campaigns	75
Best finish	Winners (1955-56 & 1968-69)
Most appearances	Giancarlo Antognoni – 341
All-time top scorer	Gabriel Batistuta – 151
Season's top scorer	Luca Toni – 31 (2005-06)
Most/least points	68 (2008-09) / 15 (1937-38)
Biggest home win	8-0 v Modena (41-42)
Biggest home defeat	0-5 v Juventus (2011-12)
Biggest away win	7-1 v Atalanta (63-64)
Biggest away defeat	0-8 v Juventus (52-53)
Most/least wins	22 (05-06) / 3 (37-38/70-71)
Most/least defeats	22 (01-02) / 1 (55-56/68-69)
Most/least goals	95 (58-59) / 26 (70-71/78-79)
Most/least conceded	69 (46-47) / 17 (81-82)

QUESTION TIME WITH... VINCENZO MONTELLA

Palmeiras defeated your men in a summer friendly, but you must surely be pleased after seeing Giuseppe Rossi's performance and goal.

"It was a positive test for Rossi, beyond the goal he has moved well, he is improving. He scored a great goal and moved very well, but nothing happened that I did not expect."

You were forced to deploy Mario Gomez and Rossi separately last season due to their injuries.

Will you continue to evaluate the possibilities of a partnership before the new campaign starts?

"The understanding between Gomez and Rossi is also growing in training."

Your men never let their heads droop despite going two goals down to Palmeiras, and they were subsequently rewarded with a consolation goal. Could this grit come in handy next season?

"I loved the desire to not lose the game even though it was only a pre-season friendly. I think that the team has done better today in their level of play, compared to last weekend against Estudiantes. We were unable to equalise, but we did well."

Considering the squad's circumstances and their varying conditions preparing for the start of Serie A, could you have asked for any more from your players?

"We had many players out of position, and we suffered on the counter-attack, but we have to work on these gaps and improve, when we expose ourselves in trying to play the game and some problems are created at the back. I will not speak of individuals, but rather underline the commitment of the group."



ITALIAN CAPS :: ANTOGNONI (73)



TOP SCORER :: BATISTUTA (151)

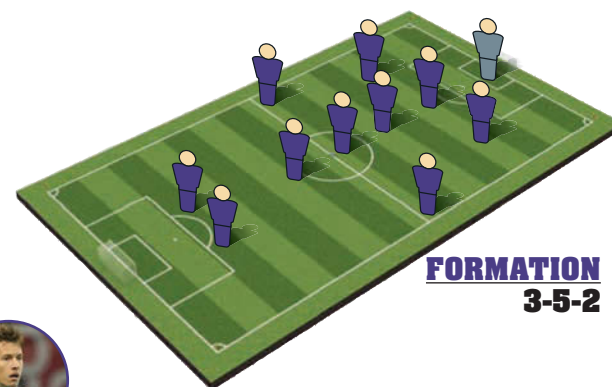
BIGGEST SIGNING :: MARIO GOMEZ - £13m, Bayern Munich (2013)

STADIUM INFO :: ARTEMIO FRANCHI

Named in memory of Fiorentina's deceased former Coach, the Stadio Artemio Franchi houses Viola fans on match days. Some of Serie A's most vociferous supporters – especially when arch-rivals Juventus visit – pack into the Curva Fiesole, where they make full use of their proximity to the pitch which came about thanks to the removal of the running track prior to the 1990 World Cup.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 47,282



**FORMATION
3-5-2**

TEAM LINE-UP

Neto



Richards



Rodriguez



Savić



Pasqual



Aquilani



Pizarro



Borja Valero



Cuadrado



Gomez



Rossi



GENOA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	3.0
Attack	3.0
OVERALL	3.0

Gian Piero Gasperini is back for the second season of his second tenure coaching the Grifone, but that's one of the few things that has stayed the same as Sam Lewis explains

A typically frenetic and chaotic transfer period has enveloped Genoa once again, with Coach Gian Piero Gasperini the only real key part of the side remaining for another season. Trigger happy, transfer batty President

Enrico Preziosi has pressed reset on the squad, bringing in 13 new names including on-loan Milan striker Alessandro Matri alongside Cagliari's Mauricio Pinilla and Sevilla winger Diego Perotti to accommodate for the losses of Alberto Gilardino, Antonio Floro Flores and Sime Vrsaljko.

The Rossoblu have had a slow pre-season and lost their opening game to Napoli while facing perhaps the most difficult opening stretch in Serie A with Fiorentina, Lazio, Hellas Verona, a derby match against Sampdoria and Parma all in the opening weeks. Despite the positive of consistency in Gasperini's return for a second season, it's quite possible the former Inter tactician's job will be jeopardy by October. Given the history and the fan base in strong support of Italy's oldest club, Genoa always set lofty targets, with turnover ever present in disappointing periods. With Matri, Pinilla and Perotti joining a solid group including young Italian talents Mattia Perin and Andrea Bertolacci, the Grifone do have the potential to be a top table side in the vein of surprise package Hellas Verona last season. However, with a difficult stretch to start and a penchant for poor-decision making from upper-management, it's just as likely to see a year of firings and failings in Liguria. ♦



Genoa's chilean forward Mauricio Pinilla celebrates with teammates after scoring during their Serie A match against Napoli at the Luigi Ferraris stadium in Genoa, Italy – 31 August 2014.

LAST SEASON

In classic style, Genoa were the first side to sack a Coach after the season's start, relieving Fabio Liverani of his duties before the end of September 2013. Gasperini's return brought an impressive rise up to as high as 7th in December, before cascading down to 14th by the campaign's end.

TALKING TACTICS

Gasperini is stubborn almost to a fault with his 3-4-3 system – and as long as he is coaching at Genoa then that will be the system the players will be used in.



THE COACH GIAN PIERO GASPERINI

After originally being sacked in 2010, Gasperini returned to Genoa after unsuccessful stints at Inter and Palermo. A believer in the 3-4-3 that earned him rave reviews in his original tenure at the Rossoblu, Gasperini was famously hailed as one of Jose Mourinho's most difficult opponents during the Portuguese's time in Italy.



CLUB LEGEND RENZO DE VECCHI

A sweeper for over 16 years at the heart of a defence that won three of Genoa's nine Scudetti, De Vecchi is a footballing symbol that marked the club's early dominance during Calcio's infancy. He later coached the side between 1927 and 1930, and briefly captained the Italian national team.



THE HOT PROSPECT MATTIA PERIN

The 21-year-old has been, like many goalkeepers of this generation, tipped to follow in the footsteps of Gianluigi Buffon and be the rightful heir to the Azzurri goal. Mixing spectacular shot-stopping ability with a rock star's fringe, Perin could have a break-out year for Genoa this season.



THE DANGER MAN MAURICIO PINILLA

The former Cagliari forward is perhaps most famous for his near-goal against Brazil in this summer's World Cup, but can be capable of the sublime at times. If the attacker can marry his talent with some consistency, he could prove to be a great partner to the more pensive Alessandro Matri.



THE NEW RECRUIT DIEGO PEROTTI

The former Sevilla man brings some pace and athleticism to the Genovese touchline and could prove to be a valuable weapon in Gasperini's 3-4-3. Wasn't first choice in Spain, but a change of scenery could bring the best from an occasionally mercurial player.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

It is always difficult to peg an objective on Genoa as their ambitions often don't match up with the results. However, with Gasperini at the helm with a host of additions to boot, a top-table finish isn't unattainable.

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie B	22nd (relegated)
2005-06	Serie C1	2nd (promoted)
2006-07	Serie B	3rd (promoted)
2007-08	Serie A	10th
2008-09	Serie A	5th
2009-10	Serie A	9th
2010-11	Serie A	10th
2011-12	Serie A	17th
2012-13	Serie A	17th
2013-14	Serie A	14th

CLUB NICKNAMES

Il Grifone, Il Rossoblu, Il Vecchio Balordo

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population) Genoa (608,154)

Founded 1893

President Enrico Preziosi

Club address Centro Sportivo Pio XII, Via Ronchi 67, 16155 Genoa/Pegli

Training HQ Centro Sportivo Pio XII, Via Ronchi 67, 16155 Genoa/Pegli

Team strip Red & blue shirts, blue shorts and socks

Club sponsor

Kit sponsor Lotto

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian Renzo De Vecchi - 31

Biggest signing Luciano Figueroa - £8.5m, River Plate (2006)

Biggest sale Stephan El Shaarawy - £8.9m, Milan (2011)

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 1592 | Wins 505 | Draws 488 | Loss 599
For 2010 | Against 2224 | Goal Diff -214 | Pts 1498

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	49
Best finish	Winners 9 (1898/99/1900/02/03/04/15/23/24)
Most appearances	Fosco Becattini - 338
All-time top scorer	Tomas Skuhravy - 57
Season's top scorer	Diego Milito - 24 (08-09)
Most/least points	68 (08-09) / 17 (73-74)
Biggest home win	7-1 v Padova (48-49)
Biggest home defeat	0-8 v Milan (54-55)
Biggest away win	5-1 v Milan (57-58)
Biggest away defeat	1-9 v Inter (45-46)
Most/least wins	22 (30-31) / 4 (59-60/73-74)
Most/least defeats	20 (50-51/59-60) / 6 (29-30/41-42)
Most/least goals	68 (47-48) / 16 (73-74)
Most/least conceded	72 (50-51) / 29 (81-82)

QUESTION TIME WITH... GIAN PIERO GASPERINI

Genoa have brought in a lot of players, how do you assess the market?

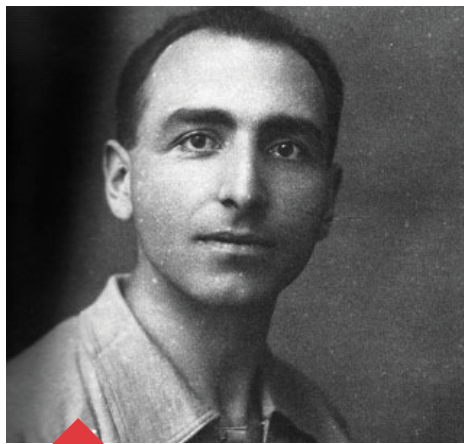
"There is a lot of curiosity around us, the team has changed a lot since last season. I hope to build a squad that can give satisfaction to the fans. This team is born in the midst of many difficulties. We've made a lot of changes in spite of some economic problems. However, this is Genoa. Necessity is the mother of invention."

You're famous for your 3-4-3 system, what do you think the secret to success with it is?

"Have you noticed the tactical changes that teams used in the World Cup in Brazil? Everyone said that three at the back couldn't work at international level, but the players proved it could. I'm already preparing a few things myself for this season. I think people will be surprised. For me, ideas are born in Italy and then stolen by other nations."

Genoa suffered a defeat in their opening game against Napoli, what was the difference between the two sides?

"It's a little smudge, in the first half we had many chances and we reacted well to the goal conceded in the first minutes by putting pressure on Napoli. We deserved a better result. In the second half they played their best, so that in the end we conceded the goal. Perhaps we lacked the right freshness, as well as in the changes, to do better."



TOP SCORER :: SKUHRAVY (57)

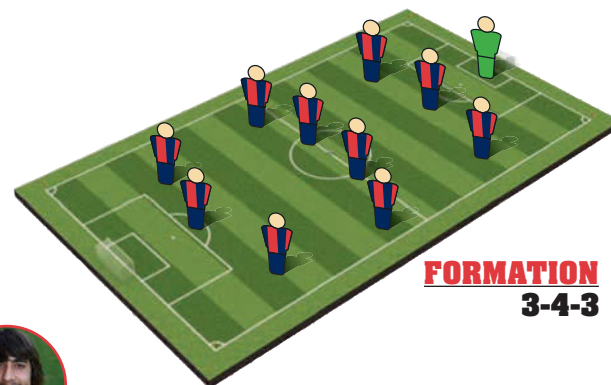
BIGGEST SALE :: STEPHAN EL SHAARAWY - £8.9m, Milan (2011)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO LUIGI FERRARIS

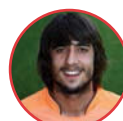
Built in 1911, Marassi, as it is often known, is one of the oldest stadiums in Italy and plays host to both Genoa and city rivals Sampdoria. Games in two World Cup tournaments have been played at the arena as well as Rugby Union matches.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 36,599



**FORMATION
3-4-3**

TEAM LINE-UP

Perin



De Maio



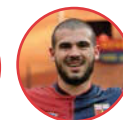
Burdisso



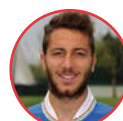
Marchese



Edenilson



Sturaro



Bertolacci



Antonelli



Lestienne



Pinilla



Perotti



HELLAS VERONA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	2.5
Midfield	3.5
Attack	4.0
OVERALL	3.3

After having broken into the top half of the table and having been a strong contender for European football last season, Hellas Verona will be aiming to do even better this year. **Rossella Marrai** assesses their chances

Andrea Mandorlini said at the start of the campaign that their ambition was to become the first team to secure safety, but after having taken some impressive form of results last season, more praise awaits them. The Gialloblu will feature in the top flight for the second consecutive season for the first time in over a decade and ambitions of another successful campaign are floating around the Shakespearean city of Verona. Their pre-season, which saw them travel from Italy to Austria and to England, was jam-packed, but it was one that brought about team unity and bonding. While Juan Iturbe and Romulo may have parted ways to the bigger clubs in the League, management responded quickly by adding some much-needed experience to the set-up. Mexican veteran Rafael Marquez and last minute signing Javier Saviola were both brought in to add stability to an outfit that lacked know-how at times last season. "This year we have changed. A lot of players have arrived at Verona who know how to demonstrate determination," said Juanito Gomez. "Last year we had a great finish and to repeat that won't be easy. However, I am optimistic and we will try in every way." One thing that stands out with the Butei this season is their hunger to constantly improve from the last campaign. And after having given some of the teams a tough time last term, they can certainly be aiming for a top 10 placing. Europe will be a tough one to qualify for, but there is no underestimating what an in-form Mandorlini side can do. ♦



"I'll retire when I feel tired" - Luca Toni

LAST SEASON

Last year's tenth place finish was a commendable effort upon their return to the top flight, seeing them rake in 16 wins, six draws and 16 losses, leaving them and Milan with the most wins between fifth and tenth place on the log. What is notable, they went on an unbeaten run of four matches in three stages of the season.

TALKING TACTICS

Having seen their traditional 4-3-3 formation excel last season, the Gialloblu are expected to stick to their winning formation. It won't come as a shock if we see them revert to using a back-five or wing-back system when facing stronger teams.



THE COACH ANDREA MANDROLINI

Having led Verona's mid-table finish in their return season to the top flight, Mandorlini has been trusted as the man to lead them further up the ladder. The 54-year-old may have seen the focal points of his squad transfer to greener pastures, but his ability to get the best out of a cohesive squad is expected to see them through.



CLUB LEGEND RAFAEL

While the likes of Preben Elkjaer and Gianfranco Zigoni are frequently entertained as the club's legends, this Brazilian shot-stopper has been with the outfit during their Serie C days. No one has lived the meaning of what it means to be a Butei quite like Rafael. Solid and loyal at the back for Verona, he deserves the credit.



THE HOT PROSPECT MATTIA VALOTI

Following in his father's footsteps at the club, Valoti joins the Gialloblu after some time spent at both Milan and Albinoleffe. He is a midfielder who is deemed to be an interesting prospect for the future. Here he will be gunning for game time and looking to put his name on the map.



THE GOAL MACHINE LUCA TONI

There is no questioning what Luca Toni means to Verona and what Verona means to Toni. The towering striker was vital to their top half of the table finish last season, scoring 21 goals across all competitions, the former Italy striker is expected to bang in some more strikes this season.



MINISTER OF DEFENCE RAFAEL MARQUEZ

The new arrival will be aiming to instil the same passion and stability he has managed to incorporate during his time skipping the Mexico national team. He is well rehearsed on the scene and is a notable inclusion to the backline.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Verona's return to the top-flight last season proved to be a success as they lingered in the top half of the standings for the whole campaign before eventually finishing in 10th place. They are a tad weaker, but don't be surprised if they shine again.

**CLUB NICKNAMES**

Gialloblu, Mastini, Gli Scaligeri, I Butei

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population) Verona (264,475)

Founded 1903

President Maurizio Setti

Club address Via Evangelista Torricelli,
37 - 37136 Verona

Training HQ Via Paradiso di Sopra, 5
Peschiera del Garda

Team strip Blue shirt with yellow side
panels, blue shorts & socks

Club sponsor Franklin Marshall/agsm/
leaderform

Kit sponsor Nike

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian Antonio Di Gennaro - 14

Biggest signing Juan Manuel Iturbe - £13.2m,
Porto (2014)

Biggest sale Juan Manuel Iturbe - £19.36m,
Roma (2014)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie B	7th
2005-06	Serie B	15th
2006-07	Serie B	18th
2007-08	Serie C1	17th
2008-09	Lega Pro PD	7th
2009-10	Lega Pro PD	3rd
2010-11	Lega Pro PD	5th
2011-12	Serie B	4th
2012-13	Serie B	2nd
2013-14	Serie A	10th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 790 | Wins 211 | Draws 269 | Loss 310
For 812 | Against 1025 | Goal Diff -213 | Pts 691

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1957-58
Top-flight campaigns	27
Best finish	Winners 1 (84-85)
Most appearances	Emiliano Mascetti - 232
All-time top scorer	Emiliano Mascetti - 35
Season's top scorer	Luca Toni - 20 (13-14)
Most/least points	54 (13-14) / 15 (78-79)
Biggest home win	5-1 v Bologna (68-69)
Biggest home defeat	1-4 v Juventus (89-90) & Roma (00-01)
Biggest away win	3-0 v Bologna (77-78), Pisa (83-84), Torino (99-00) & 4-1 v Bologna (13-14)
Biggest away defeat	0-6 v Napoli (57-58)
Most/least wins	16 (13-14) / 2 (78-79)
Most/least defeats	20 (91-92) / 2 (84-85)
Most/least goals	62 (13-14) / 14 (78-79)
Most/least conceded	68 (13-14) / 19 (84-85)

**QUESTION TIME WITH...
LUCA TONI**

The season is finally here and there have been a number of changes, what do you think of this 'new team'?

"In respect to last season, I see a team that has more physicality and commitment. The players that arrived know the Coach, and therefore they know Mandorlini's mentality. What is important is that the new guys and older ones repeat a season like last year, even if it is better to forget about it. Something special happened last term, but we have to start with our feet on the ground to get to 40 points as soon as possible."

What are your ambitions for the season?

"I hope to have another good season. After having broken records it's not easy to repeat it. I want to score, but above all to help the team and its youngsters to grow and secure salvation again. On a personal level, I want to reach 300 professional goals... I cannot wait!"

Could this be your last season as a player?

"I think so. Of course, if I score 20 goals, I will have to think about continuing some more. I want to have a great season, that is the most important thing, and then we will see in June. I'm glad to be Luca Toni, it says that I have left a mark and that is a beautiful thing."

Verona bid farewell to Juan Iturbe in the summer...

"Every now and then we write messages to each other. I also played in Rome, I gave him a bit of advice and he was happy. A beautiful season starts for him too."

What about the national team, do you think you will wear the shirt again?

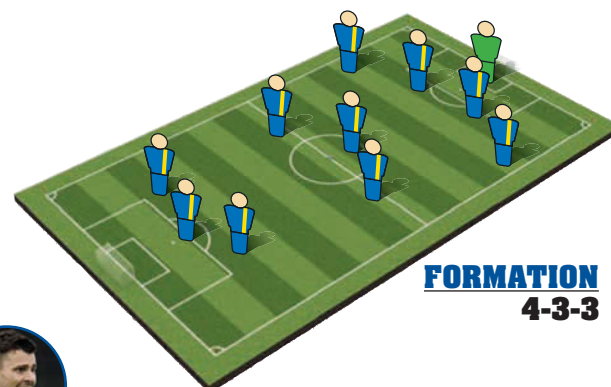
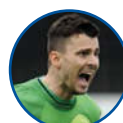
"I believe that my experience with the national team is closed. A good new Coach has arrived, who has won something. He needs to rebuild a squad that unfortunately comes from two first round World Cup exits – and with that he must start from zero."

**ITALIAN CAPS :: DI GENNARO (14)****MOST APPS :: MASCETTI (232)****JUAN MANUEL ITURBE - £19.36m, Roma (2014)****STADIUM INFO :: STADIO BENTEGODI**

While the city of Verona may be split due to its two clubs, the stadium is the only common thing both Chievo and Hellas have agreed upon. It has often been criticised for its poor visibility as the running track separates the field from the fans, but it has still staged some big games in its past, including some World Cup matches in 1990.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 67m
Capacity: 38,402

**FORMATION
4-3-3****TEAM LINEUP**

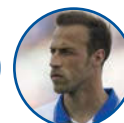
Rafael



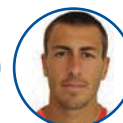
Martic



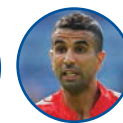
Marquez



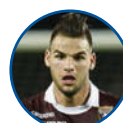
Moras



Luna



Obbadi



Tachtsidis



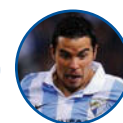
Hallfredsson



Gómez



Toni



Saviola



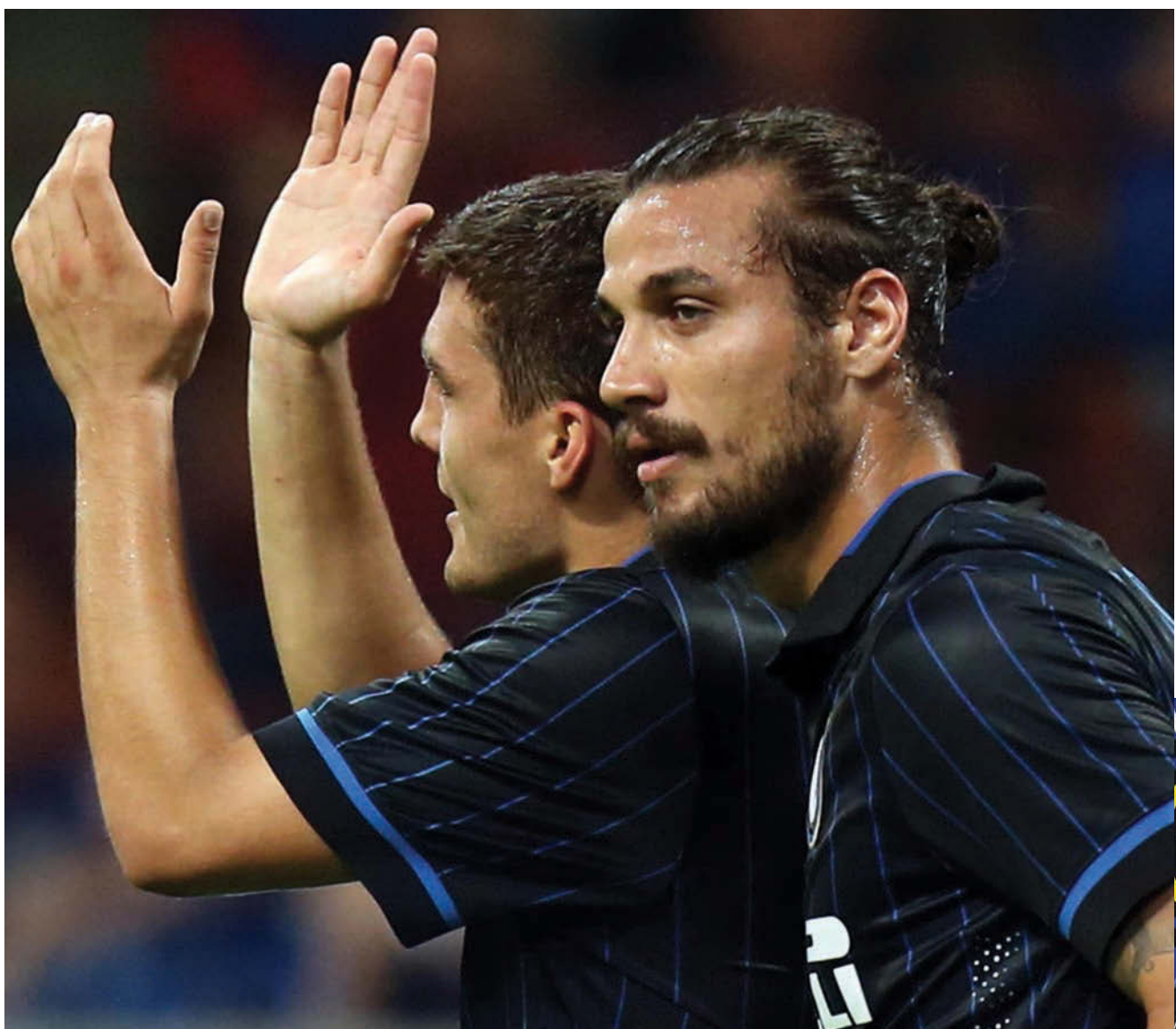
INTER MILAN

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.5
Midfield	4.0
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	3.7

Inter start a definitive new era without a single member of the treble winning squad, but **Varun Mathure** wonders if they could be plagued by some familiar problems

The new season kicks off at Inter with a new feel all around. A new owner, a new captain, a new sporting director, new commercial managers but the ambition may be the same. The Nerazzurri worked very carefully in the transfer market, as club President Erick Thohir sought to keep wage bills low and bring down the average age of the squad. This saw the Argentine trio of Esteban Cambiasso, Walter Samuel and Diego Milito leave for pastures anew, while Javier Zanetti moved from the right of midfield to behind the tables as the new Vice-President. Nemanja Vidic was the marquee signing, but the deal to bring him was done back in February. The other new additions were defensive midfielders Yann M'Vila and Gary Medel, young wing-back Dodo and maverick Italian forward Dani Osvaldo. Coach Walter Mazzarri might rightly feel that the team is short in the creative sector particularly with the departures of Ricky Alvarez and Ruben Botta. With just three forwards in Rodrigo Palacio, Mauro Icardi and Osvaldo, there is a bit of a threadbare feeling to the attacking department. Some of these issues were on display in the teams' opening Serie A game at Torino which ended in a goalless draw, courtesy of Samir Handanovic's penalty save. But, with a better central midfield and a defence which seems to be stabilised with Vidic's arrival, there is a chance that with some luck on the injury front the team could go further than last season. 🍋



Fc Inter croatian midfielder Mateo Kovacic (left) celebrates with teammate Pablo Osvaldo after scoring during the Europa League play-off match between Fc Inter and Stjarnan at Giuseppe Meazza Stadium in Milan, 28 August 2014

LAST SEASON

It was a mixed campaign for the Nerazzurri in 2013-14. They started well and the rejuvenation of some previously non-performing players put them on the right course. However, as the season progressed, defensive errors and an inability to maintain a high standard for the full 90 minutes saw them drop points against lesser opposition and ended with 15 draws.

TALKING TACTICS

There is still uncertainty over what formation Inter decide to use this season. Mazzarri prefers a 3-5-1-1 or a 3-5-2, but his decisions will be dictated by the players available to him. A 3-4-2-1 may be his secret weapon.



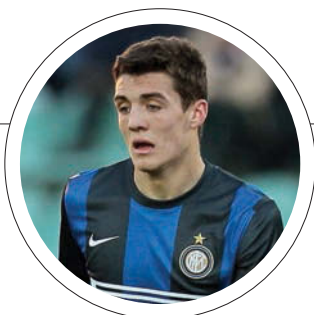
THE COACH WALTER MAZZARRI

Mazzarri's first season at Inter was not the easiest. His insistence on using defensive midfielders like Zdravko Kuzmanovic over the talent of Mateo Kovacic was questionable against some of the weaker opponents. He did sign an extension till the end of 2016 during the summer, but the feeling is that the performances have to improve this term.



CLUB LEGEND JAVIER ZANETTI

The 41-year old finally hung up his boots at the end of the 2013-14 campaign after 19 seasons at the club. The Argentine is now an integral part of the club's history and his No 4 jersey was also retired in his honour. He has been handed the position of Vice-President and will continue to work with the Nerazzurri on the technical side.



THE PLAYMAKER KOVACIC MATEO

Mazzarri was keen to move Kovacic into a playmaker for all of last season, and it seems that this year he will have to entrust the young Croatian to step up to the plate. The signs were encouraging against Inter's modest opposition Stjarnan where he got a hat-trick, but whether he can actually make it in this role will only be known as the season pans out.



THE ENIGMA DANI OSVALDO

The Italo-Argentine is back on the peninsula after a dismal spell in England with Southampton. It would be right to say that Osvaldo has been one of the enigma's of Serie A throughout his career. On his day, he can be absolutely lethal, but his off-field antics and work-rate have left a lot to be desired. Will Mazzarri be able to get consistency out of him?



MINISTER OF DEFENCE NEMANJA VIDIC

The Serbian at 32 might not conform to the club's strategy of recruiting young players, but he is expected to bring some much needed experience and stability to the back-three. He gave away a penalty and was sent off in the first game against Torino for sarcastically applauding the referee, but Interisti are pinning their hopes of making a three-man defence work on him.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

When Thohir took over he mentioned how making the 2016 Champions League Final could be an outside objective. But the rhetoric has been toned down now and the objective seems to be just qualifying for Europe once again.

CLUB NICKNAMES

Nerazzurri, Serpenti, Beneamata

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population) Milan (1,320,982)

Founded 1908

President Erick Thohir

Club address Via Durini 24, 20122 Milan

Training HQ Centro Sportivo Angelo Moratti, La Pinetina, Appiano Gentile

Team strip Black & blue striped shirts, black shorts & socks

Club sponsor Pirelli

Kit sponsor Nike

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian Giacinto Facchetti – 94

Biggest signing Christian Vieri – £32m, Lazio (1999)

Biggest sale Zlatan Ibrahimovic – £56m, Barcelona (2009)



FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	3rd
2005-06	Serie A	1st [title awarded]
2006-07	Serie A	1st
2007-08	Serie A	1st
2008-09	Serie A	1st
2009-10	Serie A	1st
2010-11	Serie A	2nd
2011-12	Serie A	6th
2012-13	Serie A	9th
2013-14	Serie A	5th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2734 | Wins 1351 | Draws 771 | Loss 612
For 4588 | Against 2831 | Goal Diff +1757 | Pts 3473

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	85
Best finish	Winners 18 (1910/20/30/38/40/53/54/63/65/66/71/80/89/2006/07/08/09/10)
Most appearances	Javier Zanetti – 606
All-time top scorer	Giuseppe Meazza – 197
Season's top scorer	Angelillo – 33 (58-59)
Most/least points	97 (06-07) / 26 (41-42)
Biggest home win	9-0 v Casale (33-34)
Biggest home defeat	0-6 v Milan (00-01)
Biggest away win	6-0 v Udinese (60-61) & v Bologna (88-89)
Biggest away defeat	1-9 v Juventus (60-61)
Most/least wins	30 (06-07) / 7 (50-51)
Most/least defeats	19 (47-48) / 1 (06-07)
Most/least goals	107 (50-51) / 26 (74-75)
Most/least conceded	60 (47-48 / 49-50) / 17 (86-87)

QUESTION TIME WITH... WALTER MAZZARRI

The transfer window is now closed. What are your thoughts on the squad at your disposal?

"I'm happy with the team. The club has done a great job based on my suggestions and working within the limits it set itself. I'm satisfied with what we're doing together. But then of course the squad I have to work with after the transfer window have to be put in a position to be able to perform at their best."

How does this season's squad compare to last term's group?

"Those who were here last year came back to the same Coach so they knew what I'd ask of them, besides any tactical aspects I mean. Things like that have made my job easier. A year ago there were lots of things we had to deal with. This time around we start with the whole picture a lot clearer."

Dodo is a player you specifically wanted. What's surprised you most about him?

"When I look at a player in a certain position, there are certain attributes I want to see. He's a young lad who's come here from Brazil, he needs to improve his tactical awareness – that's one area he has to work on. He's got the ability, we all knew that. I've helped him a lot in that respect. The way we're set up plays to his strengths as well."

Let's talk tactics...

"At the moment we're playing 3-5-2, but with a few small adjustments we can set up in a 3-4-3, 3-4-2-1 or 4-3-2-1. If you have an organised set-up, everyone can play an important role. We've improved our options in each position this year so that we can put out a strong side in midweek fixtures as well. Those who are starting at the moment are ahead of the others, but the situation changes with every training session. I always pick the team based on form."

Do you expect a more open Serie A race this term?

"I'm only concerned with my team and getting them into shape. Besides the top three from last season, there are other sides who can cause a threat. It will be a more balanced campaign than last season."



ITALIAN CAPS :: FACCHETTI (94)



MOST GOALS :: MEAZZA (197)

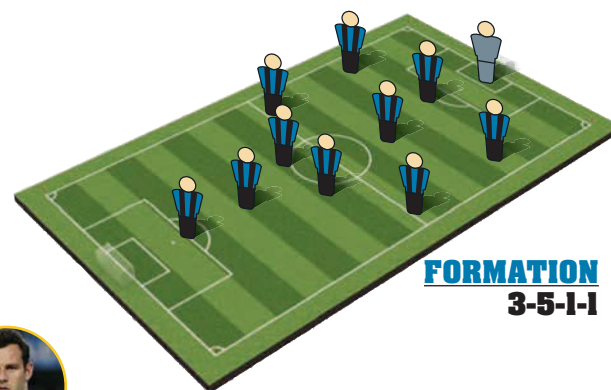
BIGGEST SIGNING :: CHRISTIAN VIERI - £32m, Lazio (1999)

STADIUM INFO :: SAN SIRO

The Stadio Giuseppe Meazza, better known as San Siro, has been one of Europe's historic stadiums. Named after one of Italy and Inter's legendary forwards, its four concrete towers and a protruding roof have become iconic, but the stadium is in need of urgent overhaul of its facilities. Nonetheless, Inter and Milan's common ground will host the 2016 Champions League Final.

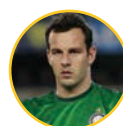


Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 80,018



FORMATION
3-5-1-1

TEAM LINE-UP



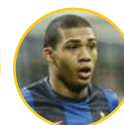
Handanović



Ranocchia



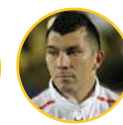
Vidić



Juan Jesus



Jonathan



Medel



M'Vila



Nagatomo



Kovačić



Palacio



Icardi



JUVENTUS

5 STAR RATING

Defence	4.5
Midfield	5.0
Attack	4.5
OVERALL	4.6

With the loss of Antonio Conte and subsequent appointment of Massimiliano Allegri, Juventus came into the new campaign looking less assured, but still as favourites. Luca Persico reports

Antonio Conte's departure just days into pre-season training notably upset Juventus' preparations for the new campaign. The 45-year-old had lost the drive to continue, though the timing of his decision was unhelpful. If Juventus were upset with Conte's desire to move on, the choice of his replacement further compounded their misery. Massimiliano Allegri, who was dismissed by Milan in January, was a controversial appointment. The tactician had success with Cagliari and won a Scudetto at Milan, but is not considered a top bracket Coach and was duly met with protests. "I understand the scepticism of the fans because in practically a day the Coach has changed at Juventus," admitted Allegri. "How to win them over? With results, work, respect and professionalism." The 47-year-old has not been gifted any big name recruits to aide his cause, but the likes of Patrice Evra, Romulo and Roberto Pereyra will enhance his options, while Kingsley Coman and Alvaro Morata – perhaps Juve's biggest signing – offer hope for the future. With a core of experience and talent already in place, it could be argued that Juventus merely needed tweaking rather than the big overhaul that some had hoped for and the pressure will be on Allegri to quickly settle. The Old Lady's opening Serie A fixtures see them start with Chievo Verona, Udinese, Milan and Cesena, while in the Champions League they have drawn Atletico Madrid, Olympiacos and Malmo. With that opposition seemingly favourable on paper, Allegri has no excuses and if he can make a strong impression in Europe, the Bianconeri faithful may warm to him. ★



Juventus' Martin Caceres (C), Arturo Vidal (L) and Kwadwo Asamoah celebrate a goal against Chievo Verona during their match at the Bentegodi stadium in Verona August 30, 2014

LAST SEASON

Juventus may have set a record points total of 102, but it was ultimately a campaign of regrets. In the Champions League, a controversial defeat to Galatasaray knocked them out in the group stages, while they missed out on the chance to win the Europa League in the Juventus Stadium after a narrow semi-final loss against Benfica.

TALKING TACTICS

Allegri will start the campaign with Conte's 3-5-2, but the arrival of Evra gives him the option of switching to a back-four. If the Coach manages his squad correctly, Juventus have the potential for real tactical flexibility.



THE COACH MASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI

Coming to prominence at Sassuolo, Allegri moved to Cagliari in 2008 and was awarded the Panchina d'Oro for his work. Despite being sacked in 2010, he was snapped up by Milan and won the Scudetto with them in his first season, though struggled to replicate that in the next three and was sacked in January.



CLUB LEGEND ALESSANDRO DEL PIERO

Del Piero won 16 major honours and scored 289 goals in 705 matches for Juventus – a return that makes him the Bianconeri's all-time top scorer and top appearance maker. Had he not suffered a serious knee injury in 1998, those stats would likely be even more impressive. The 39-year-old left Juventus in July 2012 and joined Sydney FC, before moving on to the Delhi Dynamos.



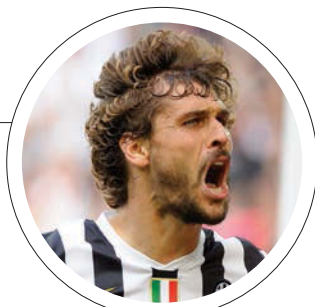
THE NEW RECRUIT ROMULO

Perhaps not the most technically gifted player, but his work-rate, pace and determination more than make up for any deficiencies. After a tough time at Fiorentina, the journeyman midfielder exploded at Hellas Verona last term and was quickly snapped by Juventus, initially on loan, once the Mastini had signed him outright.



THE HOT PROSPECT KINGSLEY COMAN

After famously netting Paul Pogba on a free transfer, director general Giuseppe Marotta looks to have pulled off another coup with Coman. The 18-year-old, brought in on a free from Paris Saint-Germain, can mix pace and trickery with a strong work rate and good tactical understanding. His pre-season form suggests he could play a prominent role this term.



THE DANGER MAN FERNANDO LLORENTE

Carlos Tevez got the headlines, but Llorente still managed 18 goals in 45 games last term. Initially, there were worries that he would struggle to make an impression in Turin, but those fears were quickly allayed. Now, under a coach who has got the best from target men such as Matri and Pazzini in the past, Llorente may thrive.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

A fourth Scudetto – Juventus start as favourites – would perhaps get the fans onside with Allegri, but a strong run in the Champions League is also key. The Bianconeri have been handed a reasonable draw and will be expected to reach the quarter-finals at the very least.

**CLUB NICKNAMES**

Old Lady, Vecchia Signora, Bianconeri, Fidanzata d'Italia

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Turin (900,873)
Founded	1897
President	Andrea Agnelli
Club address	Corso Galileo Ferraris 32, 10128 Turin
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo di Vinovo, Via Olivero 40, 10135 Turin
Team strip	Black & white striped shirts, white shorts & socks
Club sponsor	Jeep
Kit sponsor	Nike

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Gianluigi Buffon – 122
Biggest signing	Gianluigi Buffon – £32m, Parma (2001)
Biggest sale	Zinedine Zidane – £48m, Real Madrid (2001)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	1st [title revoked]
2005-06	Serie A	1st [demoted]
2006-07	Serie B	1st
2007-08	Serie A	3rd
2008-09	Serie A	2nd
2009-10	Serie A	7th
2010-11	Serie A	7th
2011-12	Serie A	1st
2012-13	Serie A	1st
2013-14	Serie A	1st

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2696 | Wins 1441 | Draws 758 | Loss 497
For 4657 | Against 2596 | Goal Diff +2061 | Pts 3640

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	82
Best finish	Winners 29 (1905/26/31/32/33/34/35/50/52/58/60/61/67/72/73/75/77/78/81/82/84/86/95/97/98/2002/03/12/13/14)
Most appearances	Alessandro Del Piero – 478
All-time top scorer	Alessandro Del Piero – 188
Season's top scorer	Felice Borel – 32 (33-34)
Most/least points	102 (13-14) / 29 (38-39/61/62)
Biggest home win	9-1 v Inter (60-61)
Biggest home defeat	1-7 v Milan (49-50)
Biggest away win	7-0 v Pro Patria (50-51)
Biggest away defeat	0-6 v Inter (53-54)
Most/least wins	33 (13-14) / 8 (38-39/55-56)
Most/least defeats	15 (61-62/09-10) / 0 (11-12)
Most/least goals	103 (50-51) / 28 (38-39)
Most/least conceded	56 (61-62/90-10) / 14 (81-82)

QUESTION TIME WITH... ALVARO MORATA

A lot of clubs were interested in you, but you opted for Juventus...

"I came to this club because it is one of the most historically great in Europe and the world, without doubt the best in Italy. I chose Juventus because they chose me and showed interest for such a long time. I can work well here, it's a magnificent club. I had interest from England and other countries, but I had my heart set on Juventus and Serie A is without doubt one of the best Leagues in the world. I know it will be very tough, but I have prepared to face it and am ready to do my best."

Did you have second thoughts after Antonio Conte was replaced by Max Allegri just two days into the new season?

"I have spoken to Allegri and I am very eager to start work. I had known I wanted to come to Juventus for a long time. The club always confirmed its interest in me and the important thing is that I have the confidence of the people here."

What are your thoughts on the Juve squad – and do you fear the competition for a starting place?

"I admire many players in this squad and in fact have several jerseys I got after Real Madrid games against Juventus. Of course playing alongside the likes of Tevez, Vidal, Pirlo and Llorente is wonderful. Being up against three great strikers is a positive, as the competition pushes me to give more for the good of the team."

You've been handed a heavy shirt – the No 9...

"I really wanted to wear that jersey, as it's a number I like and gives me great honour and responsibility."

You know what it is like to win the Champions League with Real, can you do the same here in Turin?

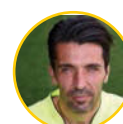
"It is an incredible sensation. I think we should take it one step at a time in Europe. I know the team is working hard already and I really want to experience that sensation of victory again."

**BIGGEST SALE :: ZIDANE - £48m****TOP SCORER :: DEL PIERO (188)****BIGGEST SIGNING :: GIANLUIGI BUFFON - £32m, PARMA (2001)****STADIUM INFO :: JUVENTUS STADIUM**

Purpose built stadium which, unlike any other top-flight arena, is owned by the club rather than the local council. Inaugurated at the start of the 2011-12 season, the atmosphere is much warmer than the cold Stadio Delle Alpi which it has replaced. The arena staged the 2014 Europa League Final.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 41,000

**FORMATION 3-5-2****TEAM LINE-UP**

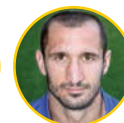
Buffon



Barzagli



Bonucci



Chiellini



Lichtsteiner



Vidal



Pirlo



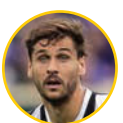
Pogba



Asamoah



Tevez



Llorente



LAZIO

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.5
Midfield	4.0
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	3.6

Lazio will be looking to kick on from their mid-table finish last time out, with a host of new signings and a change of Coach. Alex Mott examines their chances

The upcoming season should be an interesting one for Lazio. Edy Reja has been replaced by former Bologna boss Stefano Pioli and owner Claudio Lotito has made good on his promise to get the cheque book out and bring in some quality additions. The likes of Stefan de Vrij, Dusa Basta, Marco Parolo and Filip Dordevic have all come in over the summer to much excitement. Perhaps the biggest plus for fans of the Biancocelesti, however, has been the news that Miroslav Klose and Antonio Candreva will stay on for at least another season. The pair had been linked with, in the Germany international's case, retirement, or a switch away from the capital – but both have remained at Stadio Olimpico and will no doubt be key players for the new tactician. The last campaign was not a particularly exciting one for the blue side of Rome, with indifferent performances, capped by supporters' anguish at Lotito's leadership. The tifosi took action towards the end of the season and abandoned home games in protest of the 57-year-old. The President has been keen to promote a positive image of himself during the summer, and has admitted that he hopes his efforts in bringing in some new names will endear him to the fans. Of course, only time will tell, but the signs are that Lazio could kick on from their ninth place finish in 2013-14, and challenge for a place in the Europa League. ♦



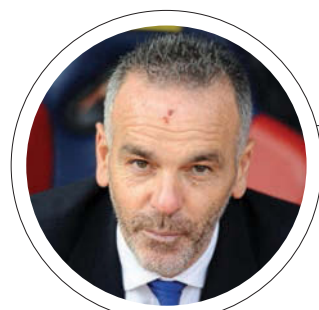
Lazio players celebrate the 1-0 lead during the match between Inter Milan and Lazio at the Giuseppe Meazza stadium in Milan, 10 May 2014

LAST SEASON

The 2013-14 campaign was an inconsistent one for Lazio. Vladimir Petkovic started as Coach and was riding on a wave of goodwill following the Coppa Italia triumph of the previous May. The Bosnian was sacked in January, though, and replaced by Edy Reja. The 68-year-old did his best in the circumstances, but could only lead the team to ninth.

TALKING TACTICS

Stefano Pioli is set to go with a 4-3-3 this term, but he does have a number of other options available to him such as a 3-5-2 or even a 4-2-3-1.



THE COACH STEFANO PIOLI

Stefano Pioli has been given a coaching lifeline after seeing his Bologna side slip out of Serie A last season. The 48-year-old was helpless as the Rossoblu went into the second tier, but was, perhaps surprisingly, handed the reins at Stadio Olimpico following Edy Reja's exit. It's now or never for Pioli.



CLUB LEGEND SILVIO PIOLA

Serie A's all-time leading goalscorer, and Lazio's club record striker, netted 148 times for the capital club between 1934 and 1943, cementing his reputation as perhaps the greatest forward in Europe. Other clubs would follow, but it is at the Biancocelesti where Piola became the beacon to which all Italian strikers aspire.



THE NEW RECRUIT STEFAN DE VRIJ

How do you endear yourself to a new club? Tell fans you turned down Man. U. That's what Stefan de Vrij did at his official presentation in July. He gave his word to the Biancocelesti before the World Cup, and despite being approached by Man. U in Brazil, the Netherlands international joined the Aquile to much fanfare.



THE HOT PROSPECT KEITA BALDE DIAO

He was a revelation last season, announcing himself in the Lazio first team at just 18. The Spanish teenager scored five times in all, but impressed with his movement, pace, and reading of the game. A year older and a year wiser, the forward is set to get even better in a reinvigorated Biancocelesti side.



THE DANGER MAN MIROSLAV KLOSE

He is evergreen. And luckily for Lazio fans, the Germany international has decided to see out his career in the Italian capital. The veteran goalscorer was cryptic last season when asked if he would retire over the summer, but after a World Cup-winning off-season, the forward has opted to stay at Stadio Olimpico for one last hurrah.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

With a host of new, quality additions to the squad, the hierarchy at Lazio will be hoping that the club push on from their mid-table finish last time and challenge for a Europa League spot.

CLUB NICKNAMES

I Biancocelesti, Le Aquile, Gli Aquilotti

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Rome (2,863,322)
Founded	1900
President	Claudio Lotito
Club address	Via di Santa Cornelia 1000, 00060 Formello
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo Lazio, Via di Santa Cornelia 1000, 00060 Formello
Team strip	Light blue shirts, white shorts, white socks
Club sponsor	None
Kit sponsor	Macron

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Alessandro Nesta – 47
Biggest signing	Hernan Crespo – £36m, Parma (2000)
Biggest sale	Christian Vieri – £32m, Inter (1999)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	10th
2005-06	Serie A	16th
2006-07	Serie A	3rd
2007-08	Serie A	12th
2008-09	Serie A	10th
2009-10	Serie A	12th
2010-11	Serie A	5th
2011-12	Serie A	4th
2012-13	Serie A	7th
2013-14	Serie A	9th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2396 | **Wins** 878 | **Draws** 725 | **Loss** 793
For 3226 | **Against** 2984 | **Goal Diff** +242 | **Pts** 2478

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	72
Best finish	Winners 2 (74/00)
Most appearances	Aldo Puccinelli – 339
All-time top scorer	Silvio Piola – 143
Season's top scorer	Giuseppe Signori – 26 (92-93) & Hernan Crespo (00-01)
Most/least points	72 (99-00) / 15 (84-85)
Biggest home win	9-1 v Modena (31-32)
Biggest home defeat	0-5 v Fiorentina (59-60)
Biggest away win	6-2 v Palermo (56-57)
Biggest away defeat	1-8 v Inter (33-34)
Most/least wins	21 (99-00/00-01) / 2 (84-85)
Most/least defeats	21 (60-61) / 3 (72/73)
Most/least goals	69 (94-95) / 16 (84-85)
Most/least conceded	66 (33-34) / 16 (72-73)

QUESTION TIME WITH... STEFANO PIOLI

How does it feel to be in charge of one of the biggest clubs in Italian football?

"I am very fired up and concentrated. I can't wait to get started and that's the attitude within my team too."

You've spent a considerable amount this summer. What is the objective for the season?

"We were constructed to get back into Europe. The club put at my disposal the squad needed to achieve our objective. Now I've evaluated the selection and we need to whittle down the squad, which the club and the interested players already know."

How do you want your side to play this season?

"I want to see my side proving its capabilities and taking control of the game. My plan is to have dynamic central midfielders who adapt to the play on the wings of our attacking players. It also requires balance with elements who know how to dictate the tempo."

Who do you see as your rivals for the European places?

"On paper there are seven clubs challenging for the top spots. Juventus and Roma are a step above, but amid the others let's not forget Udinese, Parma and Torino."

Can you tell us about some of your new signings? Filip Djordjevic and Santiago Gentiletti are looking exciting.

"Djordjevic impressed and worked well, while my first impressions of Gentiletti are positive. We had been looking for a left-footed defender who was aggressive with the right character to lead the team."



ITALIAN CAPS :: NESTA (47)

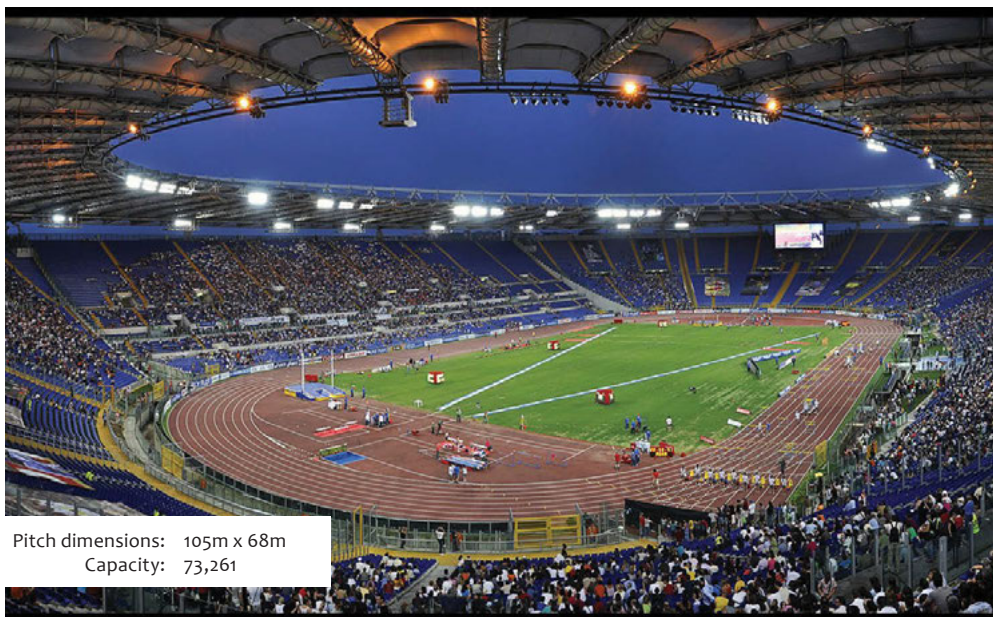


MOST APPS :: PUCCINELLI (339)

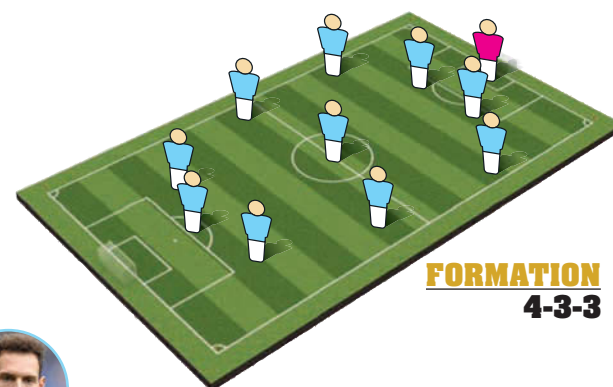
BIGGEST SIGNING :: HERNAN CRESPO - £36m, Parma (2000)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO OLIMPICO

The Stadio Olimpico is home to both Roma and Lazio and was built for the 1960 Olympic games. Both sides previously played in the Flaminio Stadium either side of WWII. Lazio also played at the Rondinella and the Stadio Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF) – reconstructed under Mussolini's regime. At this time Roma played at the Campo Testaccio. An impressive venue, it has housed European Cup Finals and the 1990 World Cup Final.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 73,261



FORMATION 4-3-3

TEAM LINE-UP

Berisha



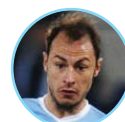
Basta



De Vrij



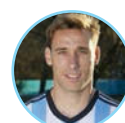
Gentiletti



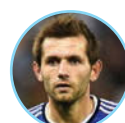
Radu



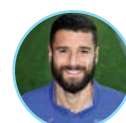
Parolo



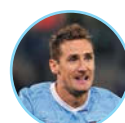
Biglia



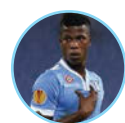
Lulić



Candrea



Klose



Keita



MILAN

5 STAR RATING

Defence	2.5
Midfield	3.0
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	3.0

It was another summer of transformation for Milan and they are rebuilding in the image of new Coach Pippo Inzaghi. Susy Campanale wonders if it'll stick this time

This team is something of an unknown quantity, all the way from players in their maiden Serie A campaigns to their first time senior Coach. It feels like Milan have been going through a transitional period for years and nobody knows quite what to expect from them this season. If all the elements gel, it could be a wonderful season with Stephan El Shaarawy and Mattia De Sciglio returned to full fitness for the good of their club and country, Fernando Torres, Keisuke Honda and Jeremy Menez rediscovering that talent after looking like shadows of their former selves, plus Diego Lopez and Marco van Ginkel given a chance to shine. If not, it'll be another horrifically long and painful year in the life of Milanisti. As is Adriano Galliani's style, the side was cobbled together at the last minute and fans had every reason to panic when top scorer Mario Balotelli was sold to Liverpool for €20m and Jonathan Biabiany was announced complete, with Milan scarf and jersey on deadline day, only to be walked back an hour later because Cristian Zaccardo rejected the Parma move in exchange. At least it worked out in the end, a last-gasp deal for Giacomo Bonaventura bringing arguably stronger defensive skills to that role than Biabiany ever could with just as many crosses into the box for the head of Torres. Milan ended the summer raking in €7m of profit from the transfer market, but will that translate on to the pitch?



Ac Milan's French forward Jeremy Menez (C) celebrates with his teammate Stephan El Shaarawy (L) and Andrea Poli after scoring vs SS Lazio at Giuseppe Meazza stadium in Milan, 31 August 2014

LAST SEASON

It started badly and ended worse, as Massimiliano Allegri was sacked in January and Clarence Seedorf proved a little too much of a wild card for the Milan hierarchy, so he too got the boot after a legal battle. The Rossoneri failed to qualify for Europe for the first time in 17 years.

TALKING TACTICS

Inzaghi starts with the idea of a 4-3-3, but has already hinted that could mutate to make way for Torres, so he has a quandary on his hands.



THE COACH PIPPO INZAGHI

Working with two levels of the youth academy in two years, he's thrown straight into the mix of Serie A. SuperPippo is probably ideal for advising strikers and by all accounts brings his obsession with football to this new career, demanding the kind of focus he always had as a player.



CLUB LEGEND FRANCO BARESI

How Milan would love to have a Baresi at the back now! The unflappable sweeper whose expression would never change, even when kicking an opponent squarely in the shin, guarded the path to goal like a surly Game of Thrones character. They really don't make them like that anymore.



THE NEW RECRUIT GIACOMO BONAVENTURA

A deadline day signing, the Atalanta wide man has been impressing on the Serie A stage for years now and it's surprising he took so long to reach a top club. Versatile, attacking, strong at crosses and with a good eye for goal, 'Jack' is an absolute steal at €5m.



THE HOT PROSPECT HACHIM MASTOUR

Only turning 16 this summer, this boy has already recorded ads and trick shot videos with Neymar. Born in Italy from Moroccan parents, the creative midfielder is overflowing with pure talent and it's only a matter of time before he explodes on to Serie A. Watch this space.



THE ENIGMA KEISUKE HONDA

The Japanese superstar arrived in January after his CSKA Moscow contract had expired and seemed thoroughly out of sorts. Now he's had time to settle and pre-season training with the team, will he finally show what he can do or find himself pushed on to the bench again?

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Adriano Galliani insisted they must aim for a top three finish, but with a newcomer Coach and team largely put together from loans or free agents, they will realistically be content with just getting back into Europe. The real objective is to win back the fans after some dire campaigns.

CLUB NICKNAMES

I Rossoneri, Il Diavolo.

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Milan (1,316,052)
Founded	1899
President	Silvio Berlusconi
Club address	Casa Milan, Via Aldo Rossi, 8 20149, Milan
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo Milanello, Via Milanello 25, Carnago
Team strip	Red & black striped shirts, white shorts & black socks
Club sponsor	Fly Emirates
Kit sponsor	Adidas

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Paolo Maldini – 126
Biggest signing	Manuel Rui Costa - £27m, Fiorentina (2001)
Biggest sale	Kaka - £56m, Real Madrid (2009)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	2nd
2005-06	Serie A	2nd (demoted to 3rd)
2006-07	Serie A	4th
2007-08	Serie A	5th
2008-09	Serie A	3rd
2009-10	Serie A	3rd
2010-11	Serie A	1st
2011-12	Serie A	2nd
2012-13	Serie A	3rd
2013-14	Serie A	8th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2674 | Wins 1294 | Draws 795 | Loss 585
For 4403 | Against 2712 | Goal Diff +1691 | Pts 3375

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	81
Best finish	Winners 18 (01/06/07/51/55/57/59/62/68/79/88/92/93/94/96/99/04/11)
Most appearances	Paolo Maldini – 647
All-time top scorer	Gunnar Nordahl – 210
Season's top scorer	Gunnar Nordahl – 35 (49-50)
Most/least points	82 (03-04) / 27 (81-82)
Biggest home win	9-0 v Palermo (50-51)
Biggest home defeat	1-6 v Juventus (96-97)
Biggest away win	6-1 v Alessandria (34-35)
Biggest away defeat	1-6 v Alessandria (35-36)
Most/least wins	28 (05-06) / 5 (76-77)
Most/least defeats	15 (30-31) / 0 (91-92)
Most/least goals	118 (49-50) / 21 (81-82)
Most/least conceded	62 (32-33) / 12 (68-69)

QUESTION TIME WITH... FERNANDO TORRES

After Atletico Madrid, Liverpool and Chelsea, why did you decide to join Milan?

"I thank my former clubs, but I needed a new challenge, new motivation. I wanted to feel important again. I need to feel happy when I play, score goals and feel like an integral part of the squad. This is truly what I wanted. The club needs to get back to the top and I need to challenge myself all over again. Historically there have always been three big European Leagues and this means I'll have played in all of them. I am not afraid, as the more difficult a challenge, the more I am fascinated by it. I needed this new test for myself and hope to experience my best years here, like a second youth."

What did it feel like visiting the Milan Museum?

"You don't need to go to the museum to know how big this club is. I saw many memories and trophies, so it is a privilege for me to be here. I hope to be up to their standard. Maybe one day my No 9 shirt will hang in the museum too."

Will it be alongside Pippo Inzaghi's jersey?

"We all know him as a player, now he'll prove his hunger and passion from the bench. I want to learn so much from him and I'm sure he'll help me settle in. I have many former teammates who played for Milan, such as Demetrio Albertini. In 2004 he always talked to me about Milan and this city."

Milan doctors said you broke records in your medical...

"I didn't know the tests were that good! When you're in good physical shape, everything comes easier."

Did ex-Inter Coach Jose Mourinho give you any advice about the Milan Derby?

"He told me about the passion that you breathe in here. I wish him all the best, just as he did with me. Milan can be champions and get back into Europe."



ITALIAN CAPS :: MALDINI (126)



TOP SCORER :: NORDAHL (210)

BIGGEST SIGNING :: RUI COSTA - £27m, Fiorentina (2001)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO GIUSEPPE MEAZZA

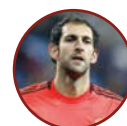
La Scala del Calcio is a nickname that sums up its place in the football pantheon – an opera house for the sport. The recently installed semi-synthetic pitch holds up much better than before and on big nights the atmosphere is second to none. It'll host the 2016 Champions League Final.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 80,018



FORMATION
4-3-3

TEAM LINE-UP

Diego López



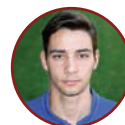
Abate



Alex



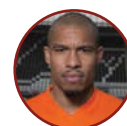
Rami



De Sciglio



Poli



de Jong



Muntari



Ménez



Torres



El Shaarawy



NAPOLI

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	4.0
Attack	5.0
OVERALL	4.0

Napoli missed out on the Champions League group stage, so the pressure is on Rafael Benitez to deliver a successful domestic season for the Partenopei, writes Sam Lewis

After a strong debut season under Rafael Benitez ending in a third place finish, many expected Napoli to retool and continue to add to a talented squad in an attempt to challenge for a Scudetto.

However, despite needs in midfield and defence, Aurelio De Laurentiis was surprisingly quiet in summer and the Azzurri are pretty much as you were going into the 2014-15, with Swansea pair Jonathan De Guzman and Michu the two biggest additions to the squad. The need for extra quality was evident in Napoli's two-legged defeat at the hands of Athletic Bilbao in the Champions League play-offs. The disparity between the two sides was concerning, and it seems that Napoli's hopes of progressing further in Serie A may need to be curbed unless a January arrival improves matters. That said, Napoli comfortably have the third best squad in Italy, a roster that is also bolstered by the added benefit of not having to stretch the squad while playing in the Champions League. The footballing and financial loss of missing out on Europe's finest competition is sizeable, but it does offer Benitez more breathing room between matches. Despite the European elimination hanging over the side, Gonzalo Higuain, Marek Hamsik and Jose Callejon is attacking star power that few teams on the peninsula can handle while young players like Jorginho and Lorenzo Insigne still have room to improve. If everything swings Napoli's way, Rafa's side are clear favourites to retain their third place spot and perhaps push Roma to be a title contender to Juventus. 



Napoli's midfielder Jonathan De Guzman celebrates after scoring the final goal in the 2-1 win against Genoa at the Luigi Ferraris stadium in Genoa, 31 August 2014.

LAST SEASON

Napoli began the season excellently, topping the table for the first three weeks before falling behind Roma to second and then Roma and Juventus in third. Benitez's side kept up that pace, remaining as the third wheel in a distant title race from Week 12 until Week 38 and finishing eight points behind Roma and 24 behind Juventus.

TALKING TACTICS

Rafael Benitez is a staunch advocate of the 4-2-3-1 system, which occasionally gets the Spaniard into trouble. Looks more like a 4-3-3 when Napoli attack, however.



THE COACH RAFAEL BENITEZ

Entering his second season under much pressure following the aforementioned European elimination, Benitez is tasked with getting the Partenopei closer to their Serie A rivals in 2015. The task will be tough, but the Spaniard is one of the league's most astute tacticians.



CLUB LEGEND DIEGO MARADONA

One of the greatest players of all time, Diego Armando Maradona joined Napoli from Barcelona in 1984 and became a symbol of the city and culture of Southern Italian life as well as its sporting hero. The Argentine delivered two League titles and a UEFA Cup during a memorable seven-year stint.



THE HOT PROSPECT JORGINHO

The Italo-Brazilian arrived from Verona in January and didn't show the dynamic play that earned him the move in the final months of the season. A talented midfielder who is as versatile as he is talented – Jorginho could be the answer to Napoli's need for central improvement.



THE GOAL MACHINE GONZALO HIGUAIN

The forward joined from Real Madrid in the summer of 2013 and justified the sizeable price tag, scoring 17 goals in Serie A and providing seven assists. A superb finisher with an eye for goal and intelligent movement, it wouldn't be surprising to see the South American net over 20 strikes this season.



THE PLAYMAKER MAREK HAMSIK

The Slovakian midfielder is the chief creator at Napoli, the hub that generates chances for the likes of Insigne, Callejon and Higuain. Despite proving to be one of Serie A's elite midfielders, Hamsik had a disappointing year last season and will no doubt be looking to improve that in the coming months.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Without the Champions League group stage, Napoli's primary objective will be to give themselves another opportunity to get back there next season. Getting closer to Roma and Juventus might not be a bad idea either.

**CLUB NICKNAMES**

Partenopei, Gli Azzurri, I Ciucciarelli

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Naples (989,911)
Founded	1926
President	Aurelio De Laurentiis
Club address	Via Alcide De Gasperi 33, 80133 Naples
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo di Castelvoturno
Team strip	Sky blue shirts, white shorts & sky blue socks
Club sponsor	Lete
Kit sponsor	Macron

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Fernando De Napoli – 49
Biggest signing	Gonzalo Higuain – £34m, Real Madrid (2013)
Biggest sale	Edinson Cavani – £51m, PSG (2013)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie C1	3rd (lost in play-offs)
2005-06	Serie C1	1st (promoted)
2006-07	Serie B	2nd (promoted)
2007-08	Serie A	8th
2008-09	Serie A	12th
2009-10	Serie A	6th
2010-11	Serie A	3rd
2011-12	Serie A	5th
2012-13	Serie A	2nd
2013-14	Serie A	3rd

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2240 | Wins 842 | Draws 723 | Loss 677
For 2864 | Against 2585 | Goal Diff +279 | Pts 2406

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	69
Best finish	Winners 2 (87/90)
Most appearances	Giuseppe Bruscolotti - 387
All-time top scorer	Antonio Vojak - 102
Season's top scorer	Edinson Cavani 29 (12-13)
Most/least points	78 (12-13) / 14 (97-98)
Biggest home win	8-1 v Pro Patria (55-56)
Biggest home defeat	1-6 v Bologna (38-39)
Biggest away win	5-0 v Modena (29-30) & Udinese (07-08)
Biggest away defeat	0-11 v Torino (27-28)
Most/least wins	23 (12-13) / 2 (97-98)
Most/least defeats	24 (97-98) / 3 (74-75)
Most/least goals	77 (13-14) / 18 (72-73)
Most/least conceded	76 (97-98) / 19 (70-71)

**QUESTION TIME WITH...
RAFAEL BENITEZ**

Aurelio De Laurentiis believes Napoli can do better in the League, do you agree?

"The lessons learned from Bilbao will make us better, but we need to stand shoulder to shoulder together if we want to move forward. Our fans are intelligent and will support us...all together for a long season in which we want to do well."

David Lopez was the final signing of Napoli's summer, are you satisfied with how the market went?

"There was much talk in the market that we needed a defender, but that was done with Kadilou Koulibaly in February. It was about getting De Guzman, then Michu, players who have characteristics we were looking for. David Lopez is a role player, but if we are not all together then this season will be harder."

The second leg against Athletic Bilbao was disappointing, did you make any mistakes?

"The criticisms are listened to and accepted by me and my staff, so we grow. I've analysed situations for many years so when something goes wrong it's easy to find a cause. Physically, what does a player need to be ready? Everything was checked. Higuain played the first game with 14 days of training, while Athletic had 15 days longer. Physically we are there, but they showed more aggression and we were not allowed to handle the ball. But we were winning 1-0 at the 60th minute and they were in difficulty – but they regained their confidence."



ITALIAN CAPS :: DE NAPOLI (49)

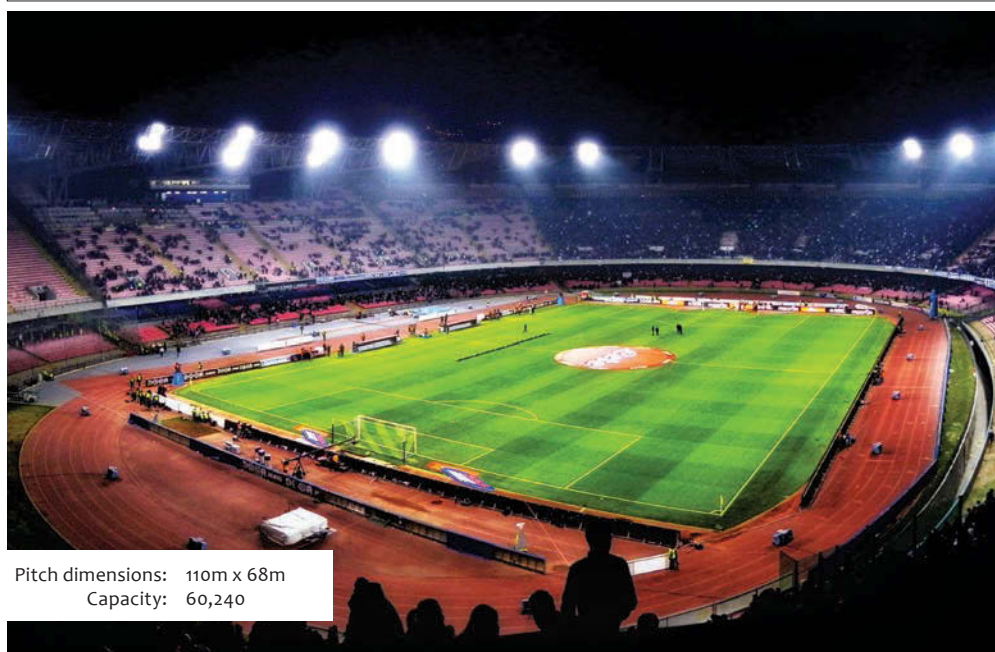


TOP SCORER :: VOJAK (102)

BIGGEST SALE :: EDINSON CAVANI - £51m, PSG (2013)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO SAN PAOLO

The third largest stadium in Italy after the San Siro and the Stadio Olimpico, the San Paolo is known for its raucous atmosphere when Napoli come to play. It was opened in 1959 as a predominantly footballing arena and is still owned by the Neapolitan municipal council.



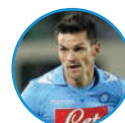
Pitch dimensions: 110m x 68m
Capacity: 60,240



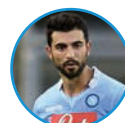
**FORMATION
4-2-3-1**

TEAM LINE-UP

Rafael



Maggio



Albiol



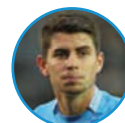
Koulibaly



Zúñiga



Inler



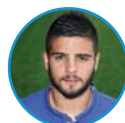
Jorginho



Callejón



Hamsik



Insigne



Higuain



PALERMO

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	3.5
Attack	2.5
OVERALL	3.0

Palermo are back in the top flight after a one year absence in which they dominated Serie B. **Lorenzo Vicini** asks whether they can stay in Serie A

After a phenomenal, record-breaking season in Serie B, Palermo are back in Serie A where they feel they belong. Since the shock relegation two years ago, fiery owner Maurizio Zamparini has revamped the squad in hope of building an outfit capable of competing in the top flight. While a major overhaul was made in anticipation for Serie B, there have only been minor changes to the squad that dominated Italy's second tier. Beppe Iachini was retained as Coach and a new sporting director in Franco Ceravolo replaced the departed Giorgio Perinetti. The only major sales came in the attack with Kyle Lafferty unexpectedly joining Norwich and Abel Hernandez moving to Hull City for a hefty sum. The attack remains the biggest question mark heading into the season with Paulo Dybala being the veteran alongside young Italian starlet Andrea Belotti, and the reborn Franco Vazquez. Palermo brought in Danish giant Simon Makienok and Bari's Portuguese striker Joao Silva to bolster the front line. The midfield is solid, if not unspectacular. Luca Rigoni and Robin Quaison were the big acquisitions to add to a formidable cast anchored by captain Edgar Barreto and Francesco Bolzoni. The defence saw the biggest overhaul as Palermo were desperate to cover inadequacies. Ezequiel Munoz is the only constant but will most likely be joined by two newcomers with international experience in Souleymane Bamba and Giancarlo Gonzalez. The club retained the services of two starting-calibre goalkeepers in Stefano Sorrentino and Samir Ujkani with the former set to retain his spot as the No 1. It'll be a difficult season that presents many obstacles unlike what they experienced in Serie B. The biggest area of concern will be in the scoring department as Palermo are gambling on a young and inexperienced core of players to provide goals. Should the gamble pay off, Palermo will enjoy a season that sees them safe from relegation. 🍷



The players of Palermo greet their supporters after their Serie A match Palermo vs Parma at Renzo Barbera Stadium in Palermo.

LAST SEASON

An unexpected relegation to Serie B forced Palermo to win promotion straightaway. After failing to take off under rookie tactician Gennaro Gattuso, Palermo soared with Beppe Iachini who lived up to his title as a promotion specialist. The Rosanero smashed club and League records on its way back to the top flight.

TALKING TACTICS

The squad is built around a 3-5-2 but don't be surprised if Iachini switches to a back four while dropping a defensive midfielder for a playmaker in a 4-3-1-2 formation.



THE COACH BEPPE IACHINI

Despite a fantastic record in Serie B, Beppe Iachini has never been able to replicate his success in Serie A. An excellent man-manager, he must prove the ability to adapt tactically if he is to last on the tenuous Palermo bench, even if Zamparini has promised to stick with him.



CLUB ICON FABRIZIO MICCOLI

He holds numerous records for Palermo such as the club's all-time leading scorer with 81 goals and all-time appearances in the top flight. No other player comes close to representing Palermo under the Maurizio Zamparini era and arguably beyond. He may be gone but he will never be forgotten.



THE HOT PROSPECT ANDREA BELOTTI

The 21-year-old stormed on to the scene after joining Palermo from Albinoleffe. With 10 goals in 25 appearances for the Rosanero and a spot in Italy's Under-21 side, the club was willing to let go of Abel Hernandez and Kyle Lafferty this summer to make way for him. Belotti will be counted on to replicate his success in Serie A.



THE NEW RECRUIT ROBIN QUAISON

Arriving in Palermo this summer by way of Swedish side AIK, Quaison is a creative midfielder who has been lavished with steep praise for his potential and talents on display. He'll have to adapt quickly to Serie A before he receives consistent playing time. Should that happen, though, Quaison could force his way into Palermo's starting XI.



MINISTER OF DEFENCE EZEQUIEL MUNOZ

With over 100 appearances for Palermo at 24-years-old, Munoz is expected to provide leadership to a backline that could feature a pair of new faces alongside him. The Argentine was head and shoulders above everyone else in Serie B and has all the tools necessary to be a revelation in Serie A this term.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Palermo must put their entire focus on Serie A safety above all else. Despite President Maurizio Zamparini's objective of making the Europa League, this is a squad that must fight tooth-and-nail to avoid the drop. Anything beyond safety would be a welcomed respite.

CLUB NICKNAMES

Rosanero, Aquile

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Palermo (678,412)
Founded	1900
President	Maurizio Zamparini
Club address	Viale del Fante 11, 90146 Palermo
Training HQ	Campo Tenente Onorato, Via Boccadifalco, Palermo
Team strip	Pink shirts, black shorts & socks
Club sponsor	
Kit sponsor	Joma

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Andrea Barzagli - 23
Biggest signing	Paulo Dybala - £10.47m, Instituto (2012)
Biggest sale	Javier Pastore - £38m, Paris St Germain (2011)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	6th
2005-06	Serie A	5th
2006-07	Serie A	5th
2007-08	Serie A	11th
2008-09	Serie A	8th
2009-10	Serie A	5th
2010-11	Serie A	8th
2011-12	Serie A	16th
2012-13	Serie A	18th
2013-14	Serie B	1st

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 916 | **Wins** 279 | **Draws** 254 | **Loss** 383
For 1031 | **Against** 1338 | **Goal Diff** -307 | **Pts** 812

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1932-33
Top-flight campaigns	27
Best finish	5th (05-06, 06-07 & 09-10)
Most appearances	Fabrizio Miccoli - 165
All-time top scorer	Fabrizio Miccoli - 74
Season's top scorer	Luca Toni - 20 (04-05)
Most/least points	65 (09-10) / 17 (72-73)
Biggest home win	8-0 v Pro Patria (50-51)
Biggest home defeat	0-7 v Udinese (10-11)
Biggest away win	3-0 v Fiorentina (48-49)
Biggest away defeat	0-9 v Milan (50-51)
Most/least wins	18 (09-10) / 3 (72-73)
Most/least defeats	19 (56-57) / 9 (04-05 & 09-10)
Most/least goals	59 (50-51 & 09-10) / 13 (72-73)
Most/least conceded	63 (56-57 & 10-11) / 35 (61-62)

**QUESTION TIME WITH...
BEPPE IACHINI**

After last season's success in Serie B, will the enthusiasm carry over into the Serie A campaign?

"My boys have worked a lot, conquering promotion, sharing important emotions together, giving the fans and the club a ride to remember. Now we must turn the page and not look back, restarting from a group that's shown compactness and organisation. It'll certainly be a difficult adventure, but at the same time, one to meet with great enthusiasm."



You have two 'keepers who are considered starters. Any doubts between Sorrentino and Ujkani?

"These are two great goalkeepers in the same cast. Sorrentino remains important for us, as is Ujkani. If we've made different choices in other matches, it's to give everyone the possibility to let the pitch have a say. It's part of the management of the group, to push everyone forward in the same way."

It's been a while since you last coached in Serie A. How have you grown since then?

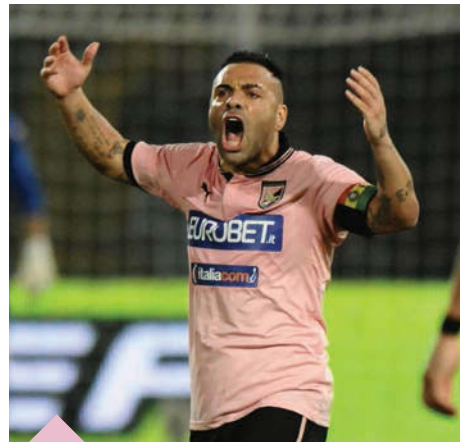
"I surely have more rank and experience. Also, I have a group in which we've shared a special kind of path, a President and club that I know and also respects me. Adding to this is a city with which I've established an excellent relationship and which I have some credibility that I can play with in that regard, born from what we've done last season."

Being at Palermo, there's always a risk of getting sacked. Are you worried about that?

"When I arrived here in Palermo, I obviously knew that we Coaches will always be in the middle of the storm the moment in which things don't go in the right way. But there's respect between the President and I. We know each other and I know exactly what to say and what to think. Right now, we must travel along this road together and with conviction."



ITALIAN CAPS :: BARZAGLI (23)

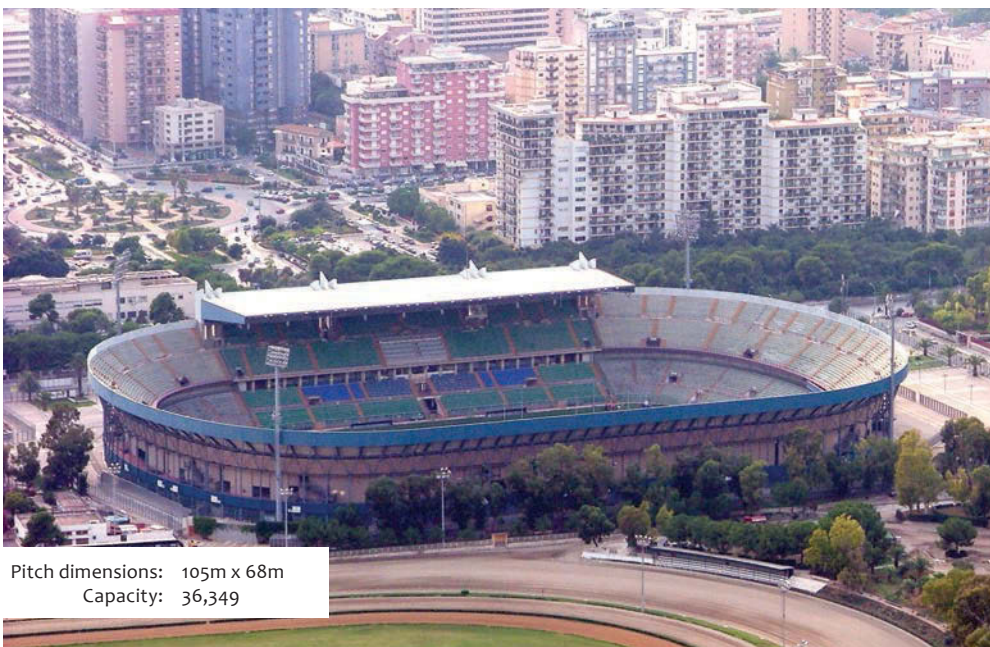


MOST APPS :: MICCOLI (165)

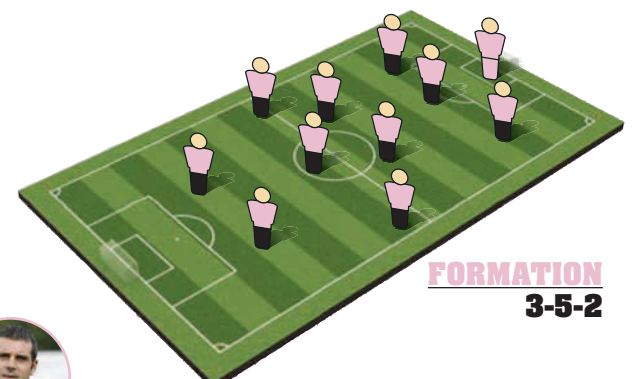
BIGGEST SALE :: JAVIER PASTORE - £38M, PSG (2011)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO RENZO BARBERA

An old stadium with numerous renovations over the years, the Barbera, also called La Favorita, adequately houses Palermo. The club plans to begin construction on a new stadium once bureaucratic hurdles are surpassed. With solid attendance numbers, the noisy sea of pink and black fans creates a memorable atmosphere.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 36,349



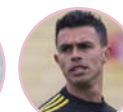
**FORMATION
3-5-2**

TEAM LINE-UP

Sorrentino



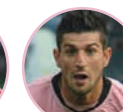
Muñoz



González



Bamba



Pisano



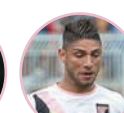
Bolzoni



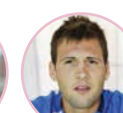
Rigoni



Barreto



Lazaar



Vazquez



Dybala



PARMA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	2.5
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	3.0

Following their excellent sixth place finish last season but heart-breaking exclusion from the Europa League, **Richard Thomas** profiles Parma

The main emotion around Parma this summer has undoubtedly been one of huge injustice surrounding the Italian Football Federation's decision not to grant them a UEFA license for the coming season. Italian football's governing body imposed the sanction due to the Ducali's late payment of a bill in March and, before you could say 'ladri' – thieves in Italian – the club were robbed of their hard earned Europa League place. President Tommaso Ghirardi, crestfallen that the Gialloblu's excellent sixth place Serie A finish would not be rewarded with continental qualification, stated in the immediate aftermath of the decision that he was 'finished with football' and that he would try to sell the club. A couple of months later, however, Ghirardi remains and the Gialloblu are beginning to look forward rather than back. Indeed, as Parma head into their third full season under the astute guidance of Coach Roberto Donadoni, they will view themselves as better placed than most in Italy's top flight. Having thus far managed to keep hold of the majority of his successful squad from last year, the former Italy boss will be hopeful of presiding over a similarly productive campaign this time around. Although Amauri left on deadline day to join Torino, Jonathan Biabiany remains after his expected switch to Milan collapsed when Cristian Zaccardo turned down a return to the Tardini. Marco Parolo, now at Lazio, will be missed in the middle, but the arrival Francesco Lodi gifts the side an extraordinary deep-lying playmaker. On the pitch, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the team could suffer a hangover from their disappointment last term, particularly considering it came about through no fault of their own. However, having retained the likes of Antonio Mirante, Gabriel Paletta and Antonio Cassano, as well as Donadoni and a host of others, Parma should be well placed to at least finish in the top half of the table once again. 🟩



Parma's players celebrate the victory at the end of their match against AC Chievo at Bentegodi stadium in Verona, Italy, 21 September 2014.

LAST SEASON

One of the surprise packages of the last campaign, Parma stormed up the table with a strong second half of the season. In doing so, it enhanced the reputation of boss Donadoni and that of Parolo and Paletta – who headed off to Brazil 2014 with Italy.

TALKING TACTICS

It looks like 4-3-3 is the best suited system for this squad, but Donadoni did go with a 3-5-2 at times last term. Expect a bit of variation depending on the opponent.



THE COACH ROBERTO DONADONI

The former Italy boss has worked wonders since January 2012. With the team in a relegation battle, he engineered a revival that saw an eighth place Serie A finish. A 10th place finish in his first full season was followed by last term's 6th, providing the club with the sort of stability and forward planning most in Serie A can only dream of.



CLUB LEGEND HERNAN CRESPO

He may have only been there for six years in total, but over his two spells at Ennio Tardini, Hernan Crespo became the club's all-time top goalscorer. The Argentine striker netted 94 times in 201 appearances, and guided the Crociati to their highest ever League finish of 2nd in 1996-97.



THE NEW RECRUIT ISHAK BELFODIL

The return of the young Algerian could prove a good move. The 22-year-old's career has stagnated slightly since he impressed for the Gialloblu in 2012-13 and moved to Inter on an initial co-ownership deal. However, he was unable to break into the Nerazzurri first team and finished the season relegated during a loan spell at Livorno.



THE ENTERTAINER ANTONIO CASSANO

Parma had many excellent performers during their highly successful 2013-14 season, but Cassano gives them that extra little bit of flair and the ability to unlock an opposition defence in one moment of magic. With the former Roma and Real Madrid man not quite so much of a tear-away off the field as he once was, keeping hold of him could prove the Gialloblu's best bit of business this summer.



MINISTER OF DEFENCE GABRIEL PALETTA

The 28-year-old had a highly consistent season for the Crociati last time out, earning him a place in Cesare Prandelli's World Cup squad. With just three international caps to his name, he will be hoping for more if he can consolidate his standing as Parma's most accomplished stopper.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Finishing as highly as they did last season seems unlikely, so the aim will be to get to the 40-point mark as soon as possible. They should be too good to go down.



CLUB NICKNAMES

Crociati, Gialloblu, Ducali

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Parma (177,069)
Founded	1968
President	Tommaso Ghirardi
Club address	Viale Partigiani d'Italia 1, 43123 Parma
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo Parma Calcio, Collecchio
Team strip	White shirts with a black cross, black shorts and white socks
Club sponsor	Folletto
Kit sponsor	Errea

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Fabio Cannavaro – 61
Biggest signing	Hidetoshi Nakata – £20m, Roma (2001)
Biggest sale	Hernan Crespo – £36m, Lazio (2000)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	17th
2005-06	Serie A	7th
2006-07	Serie B	12th
2007-08	Serie A	19th
2008-09	Serie B	2nd
2009-10	Serie A	8th
2010-11	Serie A	12th
2011-12	Serie A	8th
2012-13	Serie A	10th
2013-14	Serie A	6th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 818 | Wins 321 | Draws 244 | Loss 253
For 1087 | Against 974 | Goal Diff +133 | Pts 886

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1990-91
Top-flight campaigns	25
Best finish	2nd (96-97)
Most appearances	Antonio Benarrivo – 258
All-time top scorer	Hernan Crespo – 62
Season's top scorer	Alberto Gilardino – 23 (03-04 & 04-05)
Most/least points	63 (94-95/96-97) / 34 (07-08)
Biggest home win	5-0 v Perugia (00-01)
Biggest home defeat	0-4 v Fiorentina (99-00) & Roma (06-07)
Biggest away win	4-0 v Cagliari & Genoa (93-94)
Biggest away defeat	0-5 v Juventus (90-91 & 93-94)
Most/least wins	18 (94-95) / 7 (07-08)
Most/least defeats	18 (07-08) / 7 (91-92, 96-97 & 97-98)
Most/least goals	58 (13-14) / 32 (91-92)
Most/least conceded	65 (04-05) / 25 (96-97)

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH... FRANCESCO LODI

Parma first took an interest in you when you were aged just 11...

"Yes, I came very close to signing for them as a kid before moving to Empoli instead. Evidently they were in my destiny."

Why Parma?

"I chose to come here as I have an excellent relationship with director general Pietro Leonardi. I'm part of a good squad with a number of players who I already know. I've settled in quickly and we have all that is needed to do well."

You'll give Parma something different, will it be enough for them to stay in the top flight?

"I'm a playmaker, a role that was given to me during my time at Catania – a club where we were relegated after a fine season beforehand. I know what is required to make sure that doesn't happen again. I tell everyone here that we need to keep our feet on the ground."

Any thoughts on Antonio Cassano?

"I'm happy to be his teammate. His qualities as a player can not be criticised and he can change the outcome of a game by just standing still."



ITALIAN CAPS :: CANNAVARO (61)

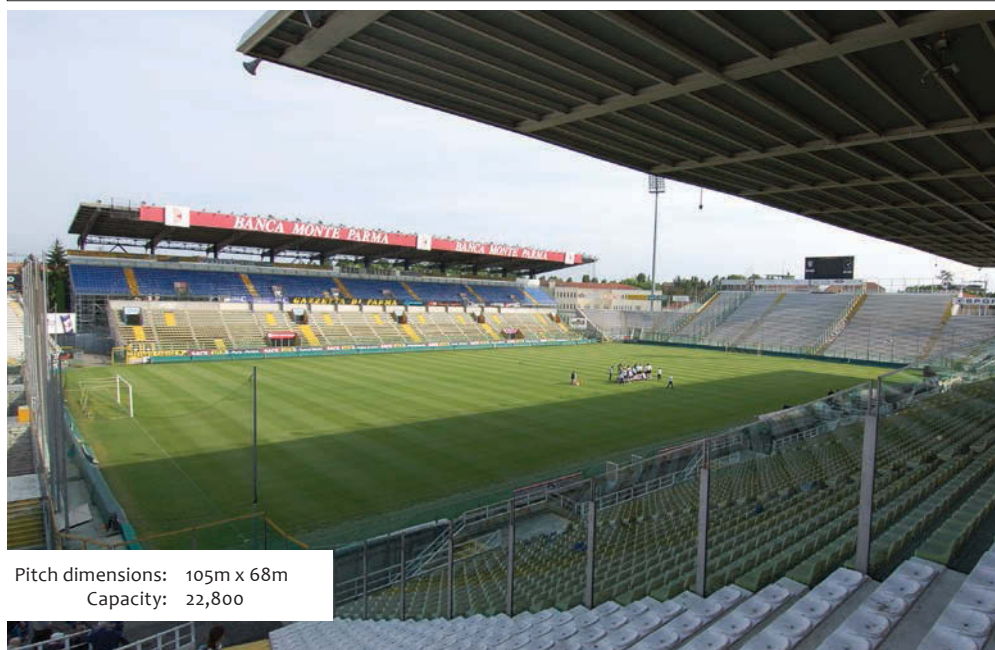


TOP SCORER :: CRESPO (62)

BIGGEST SIGNING :: HIDETOSHI NAKATA - £20m, Roma (2001)

STADIUM INFO :: STADIO ENNIO TARDINI

The Ennio Tardini stadium, built in 1923, is one of Serie A's smallest venues. The ground is named after the club's first President, who laid the first stone for the stadium. Several changes have been made since 1990. Over the 80 years since many alterations have been made, the most significant being the addition of the Curva Sud in 1993.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 22,800



FORMATION
4-3-3

TEAM LINE-UP



Mirante



Cassani



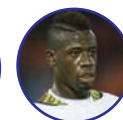
Paletta



Lucarelli



Gobbi



Acquah



Lodi



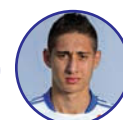
Mauri



Biabiany



Cassano



Belfodil



ROMA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	4.5
Midfield	4.5
Attack	4.5
OVERALL	4.3

Roma's extraordinary campaign last year may kindle an excess of optimism, but the Giallorossi are an upgraded team with a lot going for them. **Andrea Tallarita** weighs out their potential and their limits

Roma conducted one of the most aggressive mercato campaigns of any team in Serie A and walk into the 2014-15 season with a strong and confident side. Their midfield is still one of the best in the League, boasting an excellent young playmaker like Miralem Pjanic alongside an array of remarkably versatile footballers – Kevin Strootman, Daniele De Rossi, Alessandro Florenzi, and Radja Nainggolan. Going forward, they have reinforced their striking roster with rising star Juan Iturbe, who should form one of the fastest offensive duos in Serie A when paired with Gervinho, while Francesco Totti – even at the age of 37 – adds an extra level of depth to their options. A cause of concern may be the defence, which lost its strongest representative in Moroccan centre-back Mehdi Benatia and failed to impress in pre-season games. The new influx of players in the department – spearheaded by experienced left-back Ashley Cole and the promising Greek centre-back Kostas Manolas – will have to gel quickly if the team's targets are to be met, especially in light of a challenging first string of games.

Roma are widely regarded as the prime candidate to challenge title-holders Juventus this year, who may be weakened after the departure of Coach Antonio Conte. While the Giallorossi boast one of the best squads in Serie A – on paper, anyway – and have successfully reinforced the bench, the new challenges posed by their commitment to the Champions League will seriously test their ambitions. Not to mention possible surprises from rivals Inter, Milan, Napoli and Fiorentina... ♦



AS Roma's Gervinho (obscured) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal against Fiorentina during their Italian Serie A soccer match at the Olympic stadium in Rome August 30, 2014

LAST SEASON

Roma were without doubt last year's surprise. New Coach Rudi Garcia did a superb job at reconstructing the team, but was not able to capitalise on his opening run of 10 consecutive wins and ended up losing to an exceptionally consistent Juventus side.

TALKING TACTICS

The 4-3-3 is a staple of the team by now and it's hard to see that changing, even should things turn rough, but expect a lot of shuffling in the starters that will offer variations on the way the formation operates.



THE COACH RUDI GARCIA

French by disposition, Spanish by birth, Rudi Garcia fields one of the most flexible 4-3-3 formations in Europe and seems to have a soft spot for lightning-fast offensive strikers. His tactical awareness is excellent, but his lucidity and management under pressure need further testing.



CLUB LEGEND FRANCESCO TOTTI

Ask the stones and they will whisper reverentially 'Francesco Totti'. Still one of the best players in the League at the age of 37, Er Pupone has consolidated his status as the greatest name in Giallorossi history by a mile – or two, or three – and one of Italy's finest.



THE PLAYMAKER MIRALEM PJANIC

Arguably the most irreplaceable cog in Roma's beautiful machine. Young, intelligent on the ball and sensational at distributing play, the Bosnian deep-lying playmaker will need to be at his absolute best if Roma are to get anywhere this season.



THE HOT PROSPECT JUAN ITURBE

The tag of 'New Messi' grows old very quickly – besides, the kid has Paraguayan roots. But his acceleration is unbelievable and his dribbling skills astounding. If he can pair it with some good finishing skills, the sky is the limit. No wonder Juventus were so keen on him.



THE NEW RECRUIT ASHLEY COLE

Welcome to a whole new world, Ashley. Keep your mind off the pizza and the sunshine and stay concentrated on the game. We all know what you are capable of, but the sport is played a little bit differently in Italy. Change the game, don't let it change you.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

The tifosi are understandably tired of coming second, but consolidating their current position is an ambitious and sufficient target as it is. The Giallorossi will be looking for a spot in the top three in Serie A, a minimum achievement of passing the groups in the Champions League and a Coppa Italia Final.

CLUB NICKNAMES

The Giallorossi, La Magica, I Lupi

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Rome (2,777,979)
Founded	1927
President	James Pallotta
Club address	Via di Trigoria km 3,600 - 00128 Rome
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo Fulvio Bernardini, Via di Trigoria km 3,600 - 00128 Rome
Team strip	Dark red shirts, white shorts & dark red socks
Club sponsor	None
Kit sponsor	Nike

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Daniele De Rossi - 97
Biggest signing	Gabriel Batistuta - €33m, Fiorentina (2000)
Biggest sale	Marquinhos - €33m Paris Saint-Germain (2013)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	8th
2005-06	Serie A	2nd
2006-07	Serie A	2nd
2007-08	Serie A	2nd
2008-09	Serie A	6th
2009-10	Serie A	2nd
2010-11	Serie A	6th
2011-12	Serie A	7th
2012-13	Serie A	6th
2013-14	Serie A	2nd

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2696 | **Wins** 1100 | **Draws** 821 | **Loss** 775
For 3868 | **Against** 3065 | **Goal Diff** +803 | **Pts** 3021

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	85
Best finish	Winners 3 (42/83/01)
Most appearances	Francesco Totti - 560
All-time top scorer	Francesco Totti - 235
Season's top scorer	Rodolfo Volk - 29 (30-31)
Most/least points	85 (13-14) / 24 (72-73)
Biggest home win	9-0 v Cremonese (29-30)
Biggest home defeat	1-7 v Torino (47-48)
Biggest away win	6-1 v Alessandria (34-35)
Biggest away defeat	1-7 v Juventus (31-32)
Most/least wins	26 (13-14) / 6 (72-73)
Most/least defeats	20 (50-51) / 2 (80-81/01-02)
Most/least goals	87 (30-31) / 23 (72-73)
Most/least conceded	70 (49-50) / 15 (74-75)

**FIVE QUESTIONS WITH...
LEANDRO CASTAN****Leandro, is this the year you can beat Juventus at their own game?**

Being on a par with Juventus takes a lot, including a great deal of humility. But the real difference between us and them is hunger. They've picked up three Scudetti, while we have nothing. At this point words are of little use - we've got to let the turf do the talking.

Last year you opened the season with a loss in the Coppa Italia Final, against Lazio no less. How are you going to walk into the season this time around?

So many things have changed. The past summer everyone was stressed, we'd just emerged from a poor campaign and we didn't even know who the new Coach was going to be. Now we've got much more confidence of course, but we mustn't forget where we started from and how hard the journey has been.

The window has finally closed. Are you happy with the new squad?

To be honest, this is already a very strong team. The new arrivals are welcome, yes, but they are also necessary now that we are fighting for three different trophies.

Are you worried about no longer having Mehdi Benatia to help you in defence?

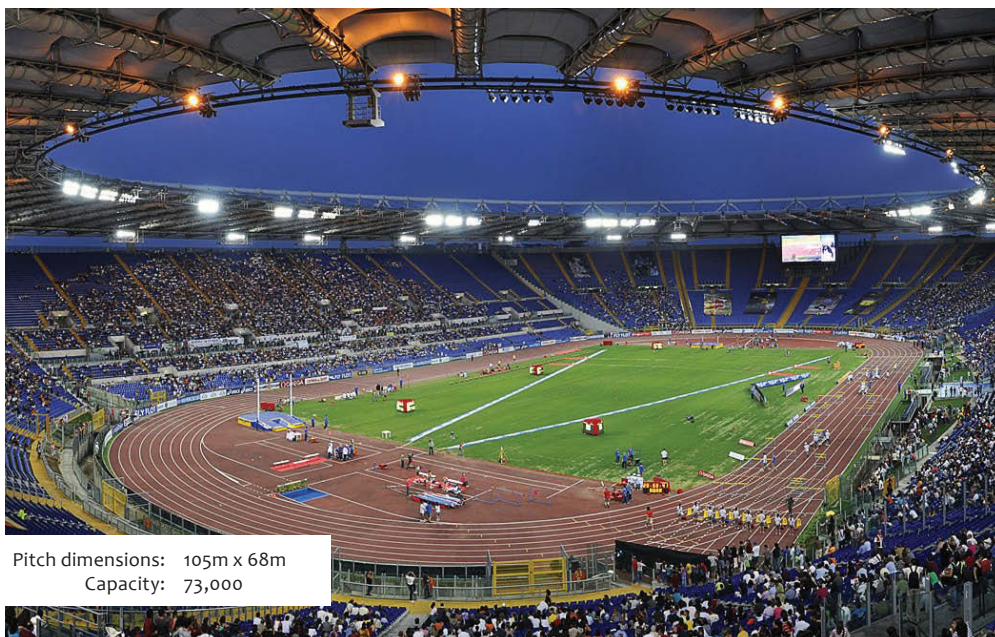
I'm 28-years-old and a professional. I've had an excellent year with him, but a player of my level can and must be able to play equally well with others.

And what about your condition?

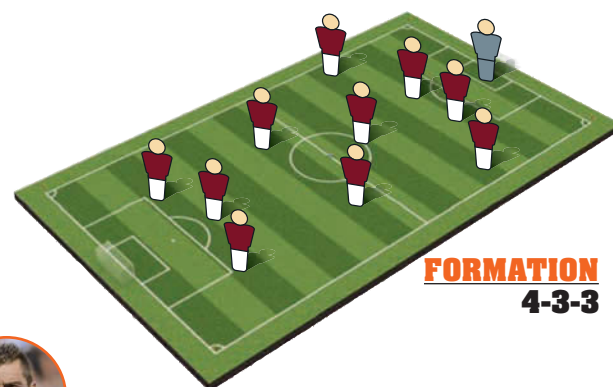
This summer was inclement to me, but physically I'm feeling fine. I'm not too far from my top condition and I look forward to playing with my new teammates.

**ITALIAN CAPS :: DE ROSSI (97)****TOP SCORER :: TOTTI (235)****BIGGEST SIGNING :: GABRIEL BATISTUTA - €33m, Fiorentina (2000)****STADIUM INFO :: STADIO OLIMPICO**

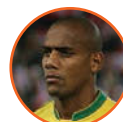
Second only to the Milanese Giuseppe Meazza in size, the Stadio Olimpico is nonetheless a dated structure that offers little in the way of good visuals or interaction with the pitch. Presumably only a temporary home as President James Pallotta works on building a new, club-owned stadium...



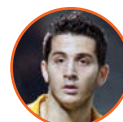
Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 73,000

**FORMATION
4-3-3****TEAM LINE-UP**

De Sanctis



Maicon



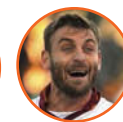
Manolas



Castan



Cole



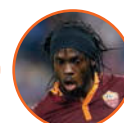
De Rossi



Pjanic



Strootman



Gervinho



Totti



Iturbe



SAMPDORIA

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	2.5
Attack	3.0
OVERALL	2.9

Film producer Massimo Ferrero took over at Sampdoria this summer. Mark Siglioccolo ponders whether he can put on more of a show than the club produced last season

Massimo Ferrero is a media fan favourite famed for his humorous quips and gaffes galore. A controversial new President seems the perfect marriage with Coach Sinisa Mihajlovic at the helm.

Since his arrival in November last year, the Serb produced a modest return of 36 points of a possible 81 to steer the club to safety. It was a marked improvement upon predecessor Delio Rossi, but whether or not an early annulment can be avoided before the season ends remains to be seen. A very busy transfer window meant that Samp welcomed a host of new players as well as some old ones. Argentina World Cup hero Sergio Romero has returned to the club from his loan to Monaco, but the 27-year-old had a proposed move to Manchester United scuppered due to his high wage demands. Emiliano Viviano, on loan from Palermo, will claim residency in-between the sticks. Maxi Lopez may have moved to Chievo but Gonzalo Bergessio arrives with a record of 37 goals and 15 assists in 113 appearances for Catania in all competitions. After a career comprised of loan deals, versatile defender Fabrizio Cacciatore was bought back to shore up the back-line along with Fiorentina's Lorenzo De Silvestri, Inter's Matias Silvestre and Djamel Mesbah from Parma. Doria look stronger on paper and they surely cannot have a worse start this time around. Ferrero and Mihajlovic are an ambitious pair and Europa League qualification will be in mind, even though it may prove to be out of reach for now. ◆



Sampdoria's players celebrate after a goal during their Serie A soccer match vs Udinese Calcio at Friuli stadium in Udine earlier this year.

LAST SEASON

A tale of two halves – as Delio Rossi was unceremoniously fired after 12 games leaving Doria with just two victories to their name and nine points. Then stepped up Mr Mihajlovic and the Serb produced a modest return of 36 points of a possible 81 to steer the club to safety.

TALKING TACTICS

Mihajlovic is a fan of 4-3-3 and it appears to be his preferred formation with Eder, Stefano Okaka and Gianluca Sansone as the forward trident.



THE COACH SINISA MIHAJLOVIC

'A History of Violence', 'How to Lose a Guy in 10 days', 'Something's Gotta Give' – any one of these film titles could conceivably describe the upcoming season for the former Sampdoria player. But, if he can keep his cool, he has a squad that should comfortably finish at the very least in mid-table.



CLUB LEGEND ROBERTO MANCINI

The fiery forward led Samp to their first and only Scudetto in 1991-92 thanks to his lucrative partnership with Gianluca Vialli. The Iesi native also inspired Doria to four Coppa Italia trophies and a Cup-Winners Cup triumph.



THE HOT PROSPECT LUKA DJORDJEVIC

As last minute deals go, this one was rather close to the wire. Doria bought the 20-year-old Montenegrin international from Zenit for an undisclosed fee. The forward spent last season on loan at FC Twente and produced one assist in 14 appearances and he has scored one in three for his country.



THE DANGER MAN EDER

Set to mark a century of appearances for the club this season, the Brazilian winger has been influential since his arrival in 2012. The 27-year-old has produced almost as many assists as he has goals for Doria as in 83 appearances he has scored 24 and assisted 20.



THE ENIGMA STEFANO OKAKA

The 25-year-old Nigerian-Italian has been placed in a firm grip by his club and he has been threatening to explode in Serie A. Capped from Under-19 to Under-21 level, the striker has a modest scoring record and consistency could see him earn an Azzurri call-up – but he must first turn potential into potency.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Providing that Mihajlovic can refrain from getting himself fired and the new players can quickly establish themselves, there is no reason the Blucerchiati can't at least finish in the top 10. A Europa League birth may just be out of reach but they could well be in contention, even if only briefly.

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	5th
2005-06	Serie A	15th
2006-07	Serie A	10th
2007-08	Serie A	6th
2008-09	Serie A	13th
2009-10	Serie A	4th
2010-11	Serie A	18th
2011-12	Serie B	6th
2012-13	Serie A	14th
2013-14	Serie A	12th

CLUB NICKNAMES

Blucerchiati, Samp, Doria

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Genoa (631,000)
Founded	1946
President	Massimo Ferrero
Club address	Piazza Borgo Pila 39, 16129 Genoa
Training HQ	Centro Sportivo Gloriano Mugnaini Rio Poggio, Bogliasco
Team strip	Blue shirts with red, white and black hoops, white shorts and socks with red, white & black hoops
Club sponsor	
Kit sponsor	Kappa

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Gianluca Vialli - 56
Biggest signing	Giampaolo Pazzini - £8m, Fiorentina (2008)
Biggest sale	Vincenzo Montella - £22m, Roma (1999)

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 1936 | Wins 647 | Draws 620 | Loss 699
For 2407 | Against 2410 | Goal Diff -3 | Pts 1913

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1946-47
Top-flight campaigns	57
Best finish	Winners 1 (91)
Most appearances	Roberto Mancini - 454
All-time top scorer	Roberto Mancini - 132
Season's top scorer	Sergio Brighenti - 27 (60-61)
Most/least points	67 (09-10) / 20 (73-74)
Biggest home win	7-0 v Pro Patria (55-56)
Biggest home defeat	0-5 v Inter (65-66/69-70) and v Milan (07-08)
Biggest away win	7-3 v Venezia (49-50) and v Padova (56-57)
Biggest away defeat	1-7 v Inter (55-56) and v Udinese (60-61)
Most/least wins	20 (90-91) / 4 (74-75)
Most/least defeats	18 (49-50) / 3 (90-91)
Most/least goals	74 (48-49) / 16 (72-73)
Most/least conceded	76 (50-51) / 21 (84-85/86-87)

**QUESTION TIME WITH...
MATIAS SILVESTRE**

An unexpected switch for you, how does it now feel to be with the Blucerchiati?

"I am very happy to be a Sampdoria player. This club has had great champions like Gianluca Vialli and Roberto Mancini – and Argentines like Juan Veron."

How did the move come about?

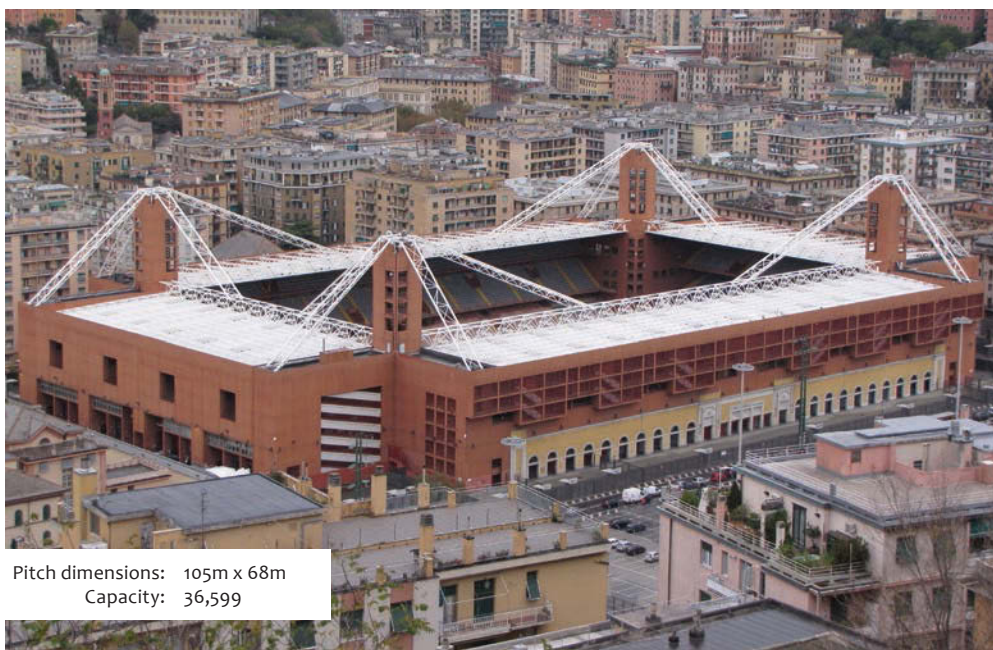
"There were a few clubs interested, but it was Samp who tried hardest to get me, so it wasn't a hard decision to come here."

Sinisa Mihajlovic is certainly a Coach with a reputation. What is your view of him? This will not be the first time he has bossed you...

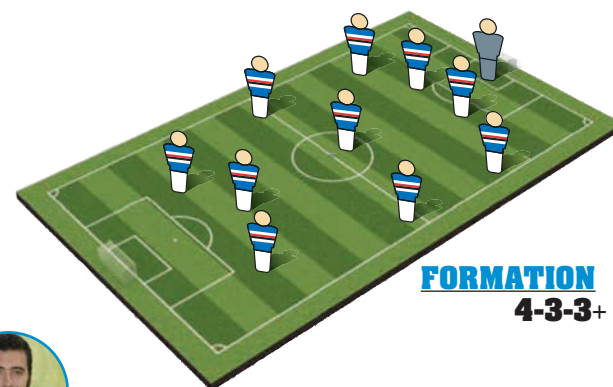
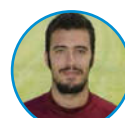
"Mihajlovic was one of the main reasons I came here. I knew him from my time at Catania and I know he's a great Coach who looks at every detail."

**ITALIAN CAPS :: VIALLI (56)****TOP SCORER :: MANCINI (454)****BIGGEST SALE :: VINCENZO MONTELLA - £22m, Roma (1999)****STADIUM INFO :: STADIO LUIGI FERRARIS**

Shared with city rivals Genoa, the Stadio Luigi Ferraris – aka Marassi – is 103-years-old. One of Italy's oldest stadiums, it is also one of the most recognizable with its four 44-metre-tall towers – one in each corner. The stadium also played its part at Italia 1990 following a redevelopment for the World Cup.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 36,599

**FORMATION
4-3-3+****TEAM LINEUP**

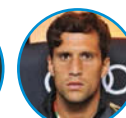
Viviano



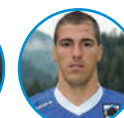
De Silvestri



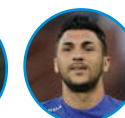
Gastaldello



Silvestre



Cacciatore



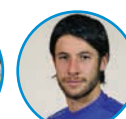
Soriano



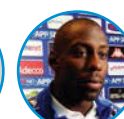
Palombo



Obiang



Sansone



Okaka



Eder

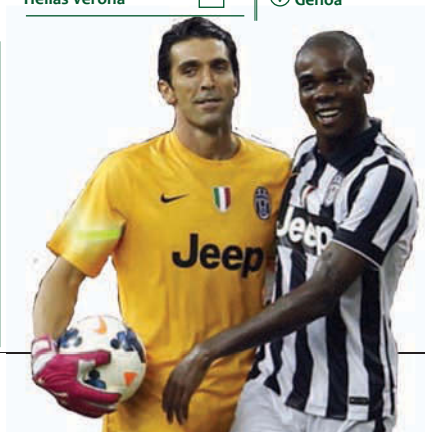


2014-15 FIXTURES

ROUND 1: WEEK 1-19 (AUG 30-JAN 18)

WINTER CHAMPIONS:

WEEK 1 (30, 31/08)	WEEK 2 (14/09)	WEEK 3 (21/09)	WEEK 4 (24/09)	WEEK 5 (28/09)	WEEK 6 (5/10)
✓ Chievo Verona Juventus ✓ AS Roma Fiorentina ✓ AC Milan Lazio ✓ Atalanta Hellas Verona ✓ Cesena Parma ✓ Genoa Napoli ✓ Palermo Sampdoria ✓ Sassuolo Cagliari ✓ Torino Internazionale ✓ Udinese Empoli	✓ Cagliari Atalanta ✓ Empoli AS Roma ✓ Fiorentina Genoa ✓ Hellas Verona Palermo ✓ Internazionale Sassuolo ✓ Juventus Udinese ✓ Lazio Cesena ✓ Napoli Chievo Verona ✓ Parma AC Milan ✓ Sampdoria Torino	✓ AC Milan Juventus ✓ AS Roma Cagliari ✓ Atalanta Fiorentina ✓ Cesena Empoli ✓ Chievo Verona Parma ✓ Genoa Lazio ✓ Palermo Internazionale ✓ Sassuolo Sampdoria ✓ Torino Hellas Verona ✓ Udinese Napoli	✓ Cagliari Torino ✓ Empoli AC Milan ✓ Fiorentina Sassuolo ✓ Hellas Verona Genoa ✓ Internazionale Atalanta ✓ Juventus Cesena ✓ Lazio Udinese ✓ Napoli Palermo ✓ Parma AS Roma ✓ Sampdoria Chievo Verona	✓ AS Roma Hellas Verona ✓ Atalanta Juventus ✓ Cesena AC Milan ✓ Chievo Verona Empoli ✓ Genoa Sampdoria ✓ Internazionale Cagliari ✓ Palermo Lazio ✓ Sassuolo Napoli ✓ Torino Fiorentina ✓ Udinese Parma	✓ AC Milan Chievo Verona ✓ Empoli Palermo ✓ Fiorentina Internazionale ✓ Hellas Verona Cagliari ✓ Juventus AS Roma ✓ Lazio Sassuolo ✓ Napoli Torino ✓ Parma Genoa ✓ Sampdoria Atalanta ✓ Udinese Cesena
WEEK 7 (19/10)	WEEK 8 (26/10)	WEEK 9 (29/10)	WEEK 10 (2/11)	WEEK 11 (9/11)	WEEK 12 (23/11)
✓ AS Roma Chievo Verona ✓ Atalanta Parma ✓ Cagliari Sampdoria ✓ Fiorentina Lazio ✓ Genoa Empoli ✓ Hellas Verona AC Milan ✓ Internazionale Napoli ✓ Palermo Cesena ✓ Sassuolo Juventus ✓ Torino Udinese	✓ AC Milan Fiorentina ✓ Cesena Internazionale ✓ Chievo Verona Genoa ✓ Empoli Cagliari ✓ Juventus Palermo ✓ Lazio Torino ✓ Napoli Hellas Verona ✓ Parma Sassuolo ✓ Sampdoria AS Roma ✓ Udinese Atalanta	✓ AS Roma Cesena ✓ Atalanta Napoli ✓ Cagliari AC Milan ✓ Fiorentina Udinese ✓ Genoa Juventus ✓ Hellas Verona Lazio ✓ Internazionale Sampdoria ✓ Palermo Chievo Verona ✓ Sassuolo Empoli ✓ Torino Parma	✓ AC Milan Palermo ✓ Cesena Hellas Verona ✓ Chievo Verona Sassuolo ✓ Empoli Juventus ✓ Lazio Cagliari ✓ Napoli AS Roma ✓ Parma Internazionale ✓ Sampdoria Fiorentina ✓ Torino Atalanta ✓ Udinese Genoa	✓ AS Roma Torino ✓ Cagliari Genoa ✓ Chievo Verona Cesena ✓ Empoli Lazio ✓ Fiorentina Napoli ✓ Internazionale Hellas Verona ✓ Juventus Parma ✓ Palermo Udinese ✓ Sampdoria AC Milan ✓ Sassuolo Atalanta	✓ AC Milan Internazionale ✓ Atalanta AS Roma ✓ Cesena Sampdoria ✓ Genoa Palermo ✓ Hellas Verona Fiorentina ✓ Lazio Juventus ✓ Napoli Cagliari ✓ Parma Empoli ✓ Torino Sassuolo ✓ Udinese Chievo Verona
WEEK 13 (30/11)	WEEK 14 (7/12)	WEEK 15 (14/12)	WEEK 16 (21/12)	WEEK 17 (6/01)	WEEK 18 (11/01)
✓ AC Milan Udinese ✓ AS Roma Internazionale ✓ Cagliari Fiorentina ✓ Cesena Genoa ✓ Chievo Verona Lazio ✓ Empoli Atalanta ✓ Juventus Torino ✓ Palermo Parma ✓ Sampdoria Napoli ✓ Sassuolo Hellas Verona	✓ AS Roma Sassuolo ✓ Atalanta Cesena ✓ Cagliari Chievo Verona ✓ Fiorentina Juventus ✓ Genoa AC Milan ✓ Hellas Verona Sampdoria ✓ Internazionale Udinese ✓ Napoli Empoli ✓ Parma Lazio ✓ Torino Palermo	✓ AC Milan Napoli ✓ Cesena Fiorentina ✓ Chievo Verona Internazionale ✓ Empoli Torino ✓ Genoa AS Roma ✓ Juventus Sampdoria ✓ Lazio Atalanta ✓ Palermo Sassuolo ✓ Parma Cagliari ✓ Udinese Hellas Verona	✓ AS Roma AC Milan ✓ Atalanta Palermo ✓ Cagliari Juventus ✓ Fiorentina Empoli ✓ Hellas Verona Chievo Verona ✓ Internazionale Lazio ✓ Napoli Parma ✓ Sampdoria Udinese ✓ Sassuolo Cesena ✓ Torino Genoa	✓ AC Milan Sassuolo ✓ Cesena Napoli ✓ Chievo Verona Torino ✓ Empoli Hellas Verona ✓ Genoa Atalanta ✓ Juventus Internazionale ✓ Lazio Sampdoria ✓ Palermo Cagliari ✓ Parma Fiorentina ✓ Udinese AS Roma	✓ AS Roma Lazio ✓ Atalanta Chievo Verona ✓ Cagliari Cesena ✓ Fiorentina Palermo ✓ Hellas Verona Parma ✓ Internazionale Genoa ✓ Napoli Juventus ✓ Sampdoria Empoli ✓ Sassuolo Udinese ✓ Torino AC Milan
WEEK 19 (18/01)					
✓ AC Milan Atalanta ✓ Cesena Torino ✓ Chievo Verona Fiorentina ✓ Empoli Internazionale ✓ Genoa Sassuolo ✓ Juventus Hellas Verona ✓ Lazio Napoli ✓ Palermo AS Roma ✓ Parma Sampdoria ✓ Udinese Cagliari					



SERIE A

FOUNDED: 1898

TEAMS: 20

MOST TITLES: Juventus (30), Milan (18), Inter (18)

RELEGATION TO: Serie B
DOMESTIC CUPS: Coppa Italia, Supercoppa Italiana
ROUND 2: JAN 25TH (WEEK 20)



ROUND 2: WEEK 20-38 (JAN 25-MAY 31)

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS:

WEEK 20 (25/01)	WEEK 21 (01/02)	WEEK 22 (08/02)	WEEK 23 (15/02)	WEEK 24 (22/02)	WEEK 25 (01/03)
✓ Juventus Chievo Verona — ✓ Fiorentina AS Roma — ✓ Lazio AC Milan — ✓ Hellas Verona Atalanta — ✓ Parma Cesena — ✓ Napoli Genoa — ✓ Sampdoria Palermo — ✓ Cagliari Sassuolo — ✓ Internazionale Torino — ✓ Empoli Udinese —	✓ Atalanta Cagliari — ✓ AS Roma Empoli — ✓ Genoa Fiorentina — ✓ Palermo Hellas Verona — ✓ Sassuolo Internazionale — ✓ Udinese Juventus — ✓ Cesena Lazio — ✓ Chievo Verona Napoli — ✓ AC Milan Parma — ✓ Torino Sampdoria —	✓ Juventus AC Milan — ✓ Cagliari AS Roma — ✓ Fiorentina Atalanta — ✓ Empoli Cesena — ✓ Parma Chievo Verona — ✓ Lazio Genoa — ✓ Internazionale Palermo — ✓ Sampdoria Sassuolo — ✓ Hellas Verona Torino — ✓ Napoli Udinese —	✓ Torino Cagliari — ✓ AC Milan Empoli — ✓ Sassuolo Fiorentina — ✓ Genoa Hellas Verona — ✓ Atalanta Internazionale — ✓ Cesena Juventus — ✓ Udinese Lazio — ✓ Palermo Napoli — ✓ AS Roma Parma — ✓ Chievo Verona Sampdoria —	✓ Hellas Verona AS Roma — ✓ Juventus Atalanta — ✓ AC Milan Cesena — ✓ Empoli Chievo Verona — ✓ Sampdoria Genoa — ✓ Cagliari Internazionale — ✓ Lazio Palermo — ✓ Napoli Sassuolo — ✓ Fiorentina Torino — ✓ Parma Udinese —	✓ Chievo Verona AC Milan — ✓ Palermo Empoli — ✓ Internazionale Fiorentina — ✓ Cagliari Hellas Verona — ✓ AS Roma Juventus — ✓ Sassuolo Lazio — ✓ Torino Napoli — ✓ Genoa Parma — ✓ Atalanta Sampdoria — ✓ Cesena Udinese —
WEEK 26 (08/03)	WEEK 27 (15/03)	WEEK 28 (22/03)	WEEK 29 (04/04)	WEEK 30 (12/04)	WEEK 31 (19/04)
✓ Chievo Verona AS Roma — ✓ Parma Atalanta — ✓ Sampdoria Cagliari — ✓ Lazio Fiorentina — ✓ Empoli Genoa — ✓ AC Milan Hellas Verona — ✓ Napoli Internazionale — ✓ Cesena Palermo — ✓ Juventus Sassuolo — ✓ Udinese Torino —	✓ Fiorentina AC Milan — ✓ Internazionale Cesena — ✓ Genoa Chievo Verona — ✓ Cagliari Empoli — ✓ Palermo Juventus — ✓ Torino Lazio — ✓ Hellas Verona Napoli — ✓ Sassuolo Parma — ✓ AS Roma Sampdoria — ✓ Atalanta Udinese —	✓ Cesena AS Roma — ✓ Napoli Atalanta — ✓ AC Milan Cagliari — ✓ Udinese Fiorentina — ✓ Juventus Genoa — ✓ Lazio Hellas Verona — ✓ Sampdoria Internazionale — ✓ Chievo Verona Palermo — ✓ Empoli Sassuolo — ✓ Parma Torino —	✓ Palermo AC Milan — ✓ Hellas Verona Cesena — ✓ Sassuolo Chievo Verona — ✓ Juventus Empoli — ✓ Cagliari Lazio — ✓ AS Roma Napoli — ✓ Internazionale Parma — ✓ Fiorentina Sampdoria — ✓ Atalanta Torino — ✓ Genoa Udinese —	✓ Torino AS Roma — ✓ Genoa Cagliari — ✓ Cesena Chievo Verona — ✓ Lazio Empoli — ✓ Napoli Fiorentina — ✓ Hellas Verona Internazionale — ✓ Parma Juventus — ✓ Udinese Palermo — ✓ AC Milan Sampdoria — ✓ Atalanta Sassuolo —	✓ Internazionale AC Milan — ✓ AS Roma Atalanta — ✓ Sampdoria Cesena — ✓ Palermo Genoa — ✓ Fiorentina Hellas Verona — ✓ Juventus Lazio — ✓ Cagliari Napoli — ✓ Empoli Parma — ✓ Sassuolo Torino — ✓ Chievo Verona Udinese —
WEEK 32 (26/04)	WEEK 33 (29/04)	WEEK 34 (03/05)	WEEK 35 (10/05)	WEEK 36 (17/05)	WEEK 37 (24/05)
✓ Udinese AC Milan — ✓ Internazionale AS Roma — ✓ Fiorentina Cagliari — ✓ Genoa Cesena — ✓ Lazio Chievo Verona — ✓ Atalanta Empoli — ✓ Torino Juventus — ✓ Parma Palermo — ✓ Napoli Sampdoria — ✓ Hellas Verona Sassuolo —	✓ Sassuolo AS Roma — ✓ Cesena Atalanta — ✓ Chievo Verona Cagliari — ✓ Juventus Fiorentina — ✓ AC Milan Genoa — ✓ Sampdoria Hellas Verona — ✓ Udinese Internazionale — ✓ Empoli Napoli — ✓ Lazio Parma — ✓ Palermo Torino —	✓ Napoli AC Milan — ✓ Fiorentina Cesena — ✓ Internazionale Chievo Verona — ✓ Torino Empoli — ✓ AS Roma Genoa — ✓ Sampdoria Juventus — ✓ Atalanta Lazio — ✓ Sassuolo Palermo — ✓ Cagliari Parma — ✓ Hellas Verona Udinese —	✓ AC Milan AS Roma — ✓ Palermo Atalanta — ✓ Juventus Cagliari — ✓ Empoli Fiorentina — ✓ Chievo Verona Hellas Verona — ✓ Lazio Internazionale — ✓ Parma Napoli — ✓ Udinese Sampdoria — ✓ Cesena Sassuolo — ✓ Genoa Torino —	✓ Sassuolo AC Milan — ✓ Napoli Cesena — ✓ Torino Chievo Verona — ✓ Hellas Verona Empoli — ✓ Atalanta Genoa — ✓ Internazionale Juventus — ✓ Sampdoria Lazio — ✓ Cagliari Palermo — ✓ Fiorentina Parma — ✓ AS Roma Udinese —	✓ Lazio AS Roma — ✓ Chievo Verona Atalanta — ✓ Cesena Cagliari — ✓ Palermo Fiorentina — ✓ Parma Hellas Verona — ✓ Genoa Internazionale — ✓ Juventus Napoli — ✓ Empoli Sampdoria — ✓ Udinese Sassuolo — ✓ AC Milan Torino —
WEEK 38 (31/05)					
✓ Atalanta AC Milan — ✓ Torino Cesena — ✓ Fiorentina Chievo Verona — ✓ Internazionale Empoli — ✓ Sassuolo Genoa —	✓ Hellas Verona Juventus — ✓ Napoli Lazio — ✓ AS Roma Palermo — ✓ Sampdoria Parma — ✓ Cagliari Udinese —				



COPPA ITALIA
 FOUNDED: 1922
 TEAMS: 78
 MOST TITLES: ROMA (9). Juventus (9).
 2014-15: Quarter Finals: Feb 4th
 Semi Finals: March 4th & April 8th
FINAL: JUNE 7TH (IN ROME)



SASSUOLO

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	2.5
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	3.0

After completing the great escape last season, the Neroverdi have spent the summer laying the foundations for a brighter future. **Livio Caferoglu** considers whether they have done enough to match their ambitions

Sassuolo enter uncharted territory in 2014-15 as they prepare for another season in the big time. The 2013-14 campaign was the club's first in Serie A and it proved to be an essential learning curve in their development. Although managerial changes and two frantic mercatos ensued, the Neroverdi soon realised that stability was key to preserving their top-flight status. Scoring important goals was what ultimately kept Sassuolo up last term, and it's fair to say that they won't be involved in many more stalemates this time around. However, it became abundantly clear that defensive reinforcements were needed if the Neroverdi were intent on establishing themselves, and in Sime Vrsaljko, Federico Peluso and Andrea Consigli, they have arrived. Much of the deadwood has also been shipped off, leaving Eusebio Di Francesco with a streamlined squad at his disposal and relations between the two parties appear to be stronger than ever. Despite being sacked in January, the 44-year-old earned a new contract after guiding Sassuolo to safety on his return and the club have backed their man by delivering many of his targets. Their pre-season form left a lot to be desired, with defeats to the likes of Carpi, Empoli and Villarreal being followed by a no-show at the Trofeo TIM, but they have started the new campaign brightly thanks to an emphatic victory over Cittadella in the Coppa Italia and a draw with Cagliari in the first Serie A matchday – and the form of Simone Zaza and Domenico Berardi in attack. Overall, their work in the transfer market and ability to secure the two young Italian forwards for at least another year means a positive season should be on the horizon for Sassuolo. With a harmonious squad being nurtured by Di Francesco, a mid-table spot is well within their reach. 🍀



Simone Zaza (R) celebrates with his teammates Nicola Sansone (C) and Domenico Berardi (L) after scoring during their A soccer match vs Cagliari Calcio at Mapei Stadium in Reggio Emilia on 31st August 2014.

LAST SEASON

A poor first half to 2013-14 initially cost Eusebio Di Francesco his job. Veteran Coach Alberto Malesani took over at the end of January in a bid to improve Sassuolo's fortunes, but five defeats in six matches paved the way for the former Roma midfielder to return and achieve survival against the odds.

TALKING TACTICS

Di Francesco's emphasis on attack means he will be sticking with the 4-3-3 formation. His predecessor Malesani switched to a 3-5-2, but it was immediately scrapped once the ex-Italy international had reassumed his duties.



THE COACH EUSEBIO DI FRANCESCO

Known for promoting youth and attacking football, the 44-year-old has rebuilt his reputation as one of Italy's most promising young Coaches at Sassuolo following a disappointing spell at Lecce. He will hope to build a dynasty in Emilia-Romagna after being rewarded with a new contract for his sterling efforts in keeping the club afloat.



CLUB LEGEND FRANCESCO MAGNANELLI

A true Captain Marvel, the defensive midfielder is one of Sassuolo's longest-serving players – only second to goalkeeper Alberto Pomini – and he has witnessed the club's rapid rise at first hand since joining from Sangiovese in 2005. With over 300 appearances to his credit, Magnanelli is the Neroverdi's record appearance holder, despite being just 29.



THE NEW RECRUIT ANDREA CONSIGLI

Sassuolo pulled off a major coup by landing the former Atalanta No 1 'keeper. The 27-year-old may have trebled his wages at the Mapei Stadium, if reports are to be believed, although the fact remains that the Neroverdi will have a top-class goalkeeper marshalling their defence in 2014-15.



THE GOAL MACHINE SIMONE ZAZA

The striker, who Sassuolo co-own with Juventus, could be ready to fill the boots vacated by Ciro Immobile in Serie A. Having netted three goals in six of the Neroverdi's crucial relegation six-pointers at the end of last term, he has continued his prolific streak this campaign with strikes in each of the side's first two matches, earning himself a maiden Italy call-up in the process.



MINISTER OF DEFENCE DOMENICO BERARDI

Last season he had a stunning haul of 16 goals, and is now Sassuolo's leading light – and Italy's attacking hope in the coming years. It may be unfair to expect another four-star showing against Milan anytime soon, but 2014/15 will be crucial for Berardi's development, even more so when you factor in his future transfer to Juventus.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Having significantly strengthened their defence – a problem position for the club last season – Sassuolo are aware that in order to build on their free-flowing nature, they must concentrate on solidifying their backline. If Eusebio Di Francesco finds the right balance in his team, there's no reason why they can't aim for a spot in mid-table.

**CLUB NICKNAME**

Neroverdi

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population) Sassuolo (41,126)

Founded 1920

President Carlos Rossi

Club address Piazza Risorgimento - 41049 Sassuolo (MO)

Training HQ Piazza Risorgimento - 41049 Sassuolo (MO)

Team strip Black and green striped shirt, black shorts, black socks

Club sponsor Mapei

Kit sponsor Sportika

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian -

Biggest signing Simone Zaza - £6.75m, Juventus (2014)

Biggest sale Luca Marrone - £4m, Juventus (2014)

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie C2/a	5th
2005-06	Serie C2/b	2nd
2006-07	Serie C1/a	2nd
2007-08	Serie C1/a	1st
2008-09	Serie B	7th
2009-10	Serie B	4th
2010-11	Serie B	16th
2011-12	Serie B	3rd
2012-13	Serie B	1st
2013-14	Serie A	17th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 39 | Wins 9 | Draws 8 | Loss 22
For 44 | Against 73 | Goal Diff -29 | Pts 35

SERIE A RECORDS

	Debut	2013-14
Top-flight campaigns	2	
Best finish	17th (13-14)	
Most appearances	Gianluca Pegolo - 33	
All-time top scorer	Domenico Berardi - 16	
Season's top scorer	Domenico Berardi - 16	
Most/least points	34 (13-14) / 34 (13-14)	
Biggest home win	4-2 v Genoa (13-14)	
Biggest home defeat	7-0 v Inter (13-14)	
Biggest away win	2-0 v Atalanta (13-14)	
Biggest away defeat	4-0 v Juventus (13-14)	
Most/least wins	8 (13-14) / 8 (13-14)	
Most/least defeats	22 (13-14) / 22 (13-14)	
Most/least goals	43 (13-14) / 43 (13-14)	
Most/least conceded	72 (13-14) / 72 (13-14)	

QUESTION TIME WITH... EUSEBIO DI FRANCESCO**What are your thoughts on Sassuolo's opening fixtures?**

"Overall, the first eight matches are certainly complicated for Sassuolo, but we have to look ahead with optimism and positivity. However, you can never say never – the beginning of last season seemed easy on paper, and we all know how that turned out."

Have you instructed your players to pick up from where they left off last season?

"We must not make the same mistakes as before. We have to take the field with anger and malice. As a Coach, I demand that this is always the case. To do well, we must try to be on a par with our competitors, and then use our experience and determination to do better than them."

Did Domenico Berardi need much convincing to stay at Sassuolo for another year?

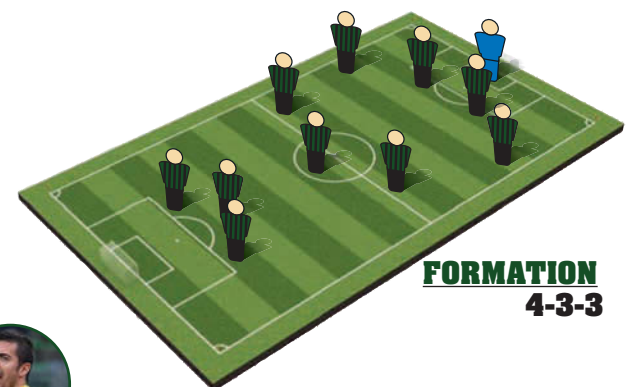
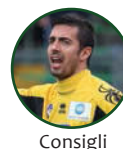
"We worked on Berardi cutting in to shoot with his right foot, even though he is primarily left-footed. I'm holding on tight to him this season. I'm not surprised that he turned down big clubs to stay at Sassuolo. We had made a pact, as he told me 'if you stay, then I'm staying too.'"

**PRESIDENT :: CARLOS ROSSI****BIGGEST SALE :: MARRONE****BIGGEST SIGNING :: SIMONE ZAZA - £6.75M, JUVENTUS (2014)****STADIUM INFO :: MAPEI STADIUM - CITTA DEL TRICOLORE**

Sassuolo's former ground, the Stadio Enzo Ricci, was deemed below Serie A standards, so the club relocated 15 miles to nearby Reggio Emilia to the home of Reggiana. Built in 1995, the naming rights to the Stadio Citta del Tricolore were purchased by sponsors Mapei in June 2013, before the Neroverdi bought the venue six months later.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 20,084

**FORMATION**
4-3-3**TEAM LINE-UP**

Consigli



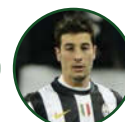
Vrsaljko



Cannavaro



Manfredini



Peluso



Biondini



Magnanelli



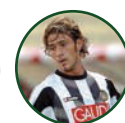
Missiroli



Berardi



Zaza



Floro Flores



TORINO

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	4.0
Attack	4.0
OVERALL	3.7

Torino are back in Europe for the first time in 20 years, but without the strike partnership that took them there. **Alasdair Mackenzie** examines an exciting 2014-15 for the Granata

It has been a long and difficult past two decades for the Torino faithful and after Alessio Cerci's heart-wrenching penalty miss on the final day of last season, it seemed the club's wait for European football would last even longer. However, after Parma were controversially thrown out of Europe for failing to pay a tax bill on time, Giampiero Ventura's side found themselves with a season of Europa League football to look forward to. Last season's heroics saw the club secure a seventh-place finish and in **Ciro Immobile** they could also boast Serie A's Capocannoniere. This wouldn't last long however, as Borussia Dortmund swooped to snap up Immobile before a deadline day deal saw Cerci finally leave for Atletico Madrid after months of uncertainty surrounding his future. Cerci and Immobile scored 35 goals and made 15 assists between them last year and they leave an enormous void to be filled. However, Toro have strengthened well over the summer and can be quietly confident of a good season despite the departure of their influential duo. A good balance was found in their transfer strategy, as experienced Serie A players like Antonio Nocerino, Cristian Molinaro, Fabio Quagliarella and Amauri add much needed experience, with the latter two promising to form an intriguing partnership. In addition, exciting foreign talents such as Juan Sanchez Mino, Bruno Peres and Pontus Jansson have been snapped up as well as some promising youngsters like Marco Benassi, Gaston Silva and Josef Martinez. Together they should provide the required depth to allow the Granata to compete strongly on domestic and European fronts once again. ♦



Torino players acknowledge their supporters at the end of their Italian Serie A soccer match against Inter Milan at Olympic Stadium in Turin August 31, 2014

LAST SEASON

Capocannoniere **Ciro Immobile** and an inspired **Alessio Cerci** fired Torino to a seventh-place finish, their highest Serie A standing since 1991-92. After Parma's much disputed ejection from the Europa League, the place was handed to Toro and they will compete in Europe again.

TALKING TACTICS

Ventura will again set his side out in a 3-5-2 system similar to rivals Juventus. Wing-backs **Matteo Darmian** and **Cristian Molinaro** provide width with **Quagliarella** likely to operate just behind a lone striker.



THE COACH GIAMPIERO VENTURA

Having been involved in coaching for almost 40 years, you would be forgiven for thinking the vastly experienced Ventura has seen it all before. However, this season marks the 66-year-old's European bow and he will have his work cut out bedding in a multitude of new faces and adjusting to the demands of midweek matches.



CLUB LEGEND VALENTINO MAZZOLA

Captain of the celebrated 'Grande Torino' side of the 1940s that won five consecutive Scudetti and set a plethora of records, Mazzola is considered one of the true greats. An attacking midfielder who scored a sensational 118 goals in 204 appearances for the Granata, he tragically perished in the Superga air disaster of 1949.



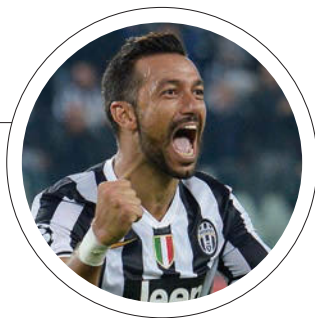
THE NEW RECRUIT AMAURI

A dramatic capture on deadline day, the 34-year-old resurrected his career at Parma after a disappointing spell with Juventus. Scorer of 8 goals last season, the 6'2" striker is still a real handful for and will provide great competition for places with **Quagliarella**, **Marcelo Larrondo**, **Josef Martinez** and **Paulo Vitor Barreto**.



THE HOT PROSPECT MARCO BENASSI

The Inter youth product joined this summer after an impressive loan spell with Livorno last season in which he scored twice and made four assists. The 20-year-old has plenty of potential, having been capped at almost every youth level for the Azzurri, and could thrive under the tutelage of Ventura.



THE DANGER MAN FABIO QUAGLIARELLA

Despite his strong Juventus connections, **Quagliarella** began his career with Torino and makes an emotional return to the club where it all began. The 31-year-old should thrive from the regular game time he couldn't secure at Juve and with 78 Serie A goals he is a proven threat that should go some way to filling the void left by Immobile.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Ventura would love to go one better than last season and take his side to a top-six finish. However, the club will also be focused on reaching the knock-out stages of the Europa League. To achieve both would be a remarkable success given the side's inexperience with the rigours of European competition.

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie B	3rd
2005-06	Serie B	3rd
2006-07	Serie A	16th
2007-08	Serie A	15th
2008-09	Serie A	18th
2009-10	Serie B	5th
2010-11	Serie B	8th
2011-12	Serie B	2nd
2012-13	Serie A	16th
2013-14	Serie A	7th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 2306 | **Wins** 845 | **Draws** 753 | **Loss** 708
For 3018 | **Against** 2676 | **Goal Diff** +342 | **Pts** 2442

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1929-30
Top-flight campaigns	71
Best finish	Winners 6 (43/46/47/48/49/76)
Most appearances	Giorgio Ferrini - 405
All-time top scorer	Paolino Pulici - 134
Season's top scorer	Valentino Mazzola - 29 (46-47)
Most/least points	65 (47-48) / 21 (02-03)
Biggest home win	10-0 v Alessandria (47-48)
Biggest home defeat	0-6 Milan (51-52) and Fiorentina (58-59)
Biggest away win	7-1 v Roma (47-48)
Biggest away defeat	0-7 v Milan (49-50)
Most/least wins	29 (47-48) / 4 (02-03)
Most/least defeats	21 (02-03) / 1 (76-77)
Most/least goals	125 (47-48) / 20 (69-70)
Most/least conceded	76 (49-50) / 14 (76-77)

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Turin (900,873)
Founded	1906
President	Urbano Cairo
Club address	Via dell'Arcivescovado 1, 10121 Turin
Training HQ	Sisport, Corso Unione Sovietica 295, Turin
Team strip	Maroon shirts, shorts & socks
Club sponsor	Beretta
Kit sponsor	Kappa

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Francesco Graziani - 64
Biggest signing	Rolando Bianchi - £5m, Manchester City (2008)
Biggest sale	Gianluigi Lentini - £13m, Milan (1992)

**QUESTION TIME WITH...
URBANO CAIRO**

How would you judge your transfer activity this summer and what can you now achieve?

"I don't want to give judgements on the success of our transfer market, it will be on the pitch that those judgements are made. I would prefer not to say anything about objectives, but the start we have had is positive - we've made it to the group stages of the Europa League and in our opening game against Inter we competed very well."



There seems to be some talented youth in the squad...

"We have dozens of young prospects in the squad, some of which we still haven't seen. Alongside them there are experienced players who can be of great help to them. We have produced a great school for young players and there are 11 youngsters on loan at other clubs at the moment where they can develop."

Which particular starlet do you think will be a surprise this season?

"In my opinion there are many who could, but I prefer to talk about the squad as a whole rather than individuals."

What impact do you think Amauri could have?

"He is a player who will adapt himself well to the characteristics requested by our Coach and in the last two seasons he has scored 10 goals a year. He always wants to make himself available and I am convinced that he can do well in a Granata shirt."

The departure of Alessio Cerci was left very late...

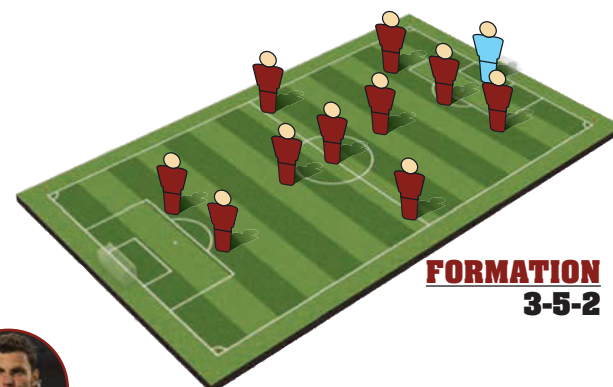
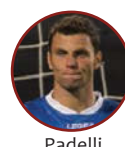
"First of all there were only lots of words without any concrete offer. It wasn't taken for granted that in the end he would leave as I didn't want to sell him on the final day, but the dynamics of the market brought us in that direction."

**ITALIAN CAPS :: GRAZIANI (64)****TOP SCORER :: PULICI (134)****BIGGEST SIGNING :: ROLANDO BIANCHI - £5m, Man City (2008)****STADIUM INFO :: STADIO OLIMPICO DI TORINO**

Renovated for the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, it was converted to a football ground afterwards. The upgrade cost €30m and made the stadium home to both Torino and Juventus up until the Juventus Stadium was opened in 2011. The Curva Maratona on the northern side is the most lively and colourful section on match days.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 28,140

**FORMATION
3-5-2****TEAM LINE-UP**

Padelli



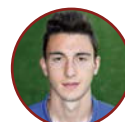
Bovo



Glik



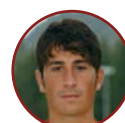
Moretti



Darmian



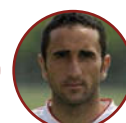
Nocerino



Vives



El Kaddouri



Molinaro



Quagliarella



Amauri



UDINESE

5 STAR RATING

Defence	3.0
Midfield	3.0
Attack	3.5
OVERALL	3.1

For the first time since 2010, Udinese head into a season without iconic Coach Francesco Guidolin and no European football. Aman Sehdev previews a new era in Udine

It's all change at Udinese. After falling out of the top five for the first time since the 2009-10 season, the Bianconeri find themselves without one of its most influential personnel. After guiding Udinese to three top five finishes in the last four seasons, Coach Francesco Guidolin has retired from active management to take up a director role at the club. It is now up to former Inter boss Andrea Stramaccioni and assistant manager, former Inter midfielder Dejan Stankovic, to return the club to its 2010-2013 heyday. Stramaccioni, regarded as one of the peninsula's most promising Coaches after his successful stint with Inter's Primavera side, endured a frustrating time with the senior Nerazzurri and was let go after just one season. He has the opportunity to get his coaching career back on a track, in a less pressure-filled environment. That will be no easy feat however. The Friuli club have one of the youngest squads in Serie A and continue to rely heavily on iconic captain Antonio Di Natale. Over the years the Zebrette have continually sold off its best players, this summer is no different, as talented Argentine Roberto Pereyra has been offloaded to Juventus and Serbian defender Dusan Basta sold to Lazio. Stramaccioni, known for his ability to work with youth, has an exciting crop of talented young guns at his disposal. The Udinese faithful will be hoping the likes of Simone Scuffet, Emmanuel Agyemang-Badu and Luis Muriel continue their growth, during a period of rebuilding in Udine. ♦



Udinese's defender Danilo Larangeira celebrates with his teammates after scoring during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Udinese Calcio and SSC Napoli at Friuli Stadium in Udine, 21 Settembre 2014.

LAST SEASON

The Bianconeri failed to navigate the Europa League play-offs and finished outside the top five – which had become their natural habitat. A semi-final appearance in the Coppa Italia did little to lift the mood at the Friuli, in what was ultimately a disappointing campaign for a perennial European chasing team.

TALKING TACTICS

Stramaccioni favours a 3-5-2 with Muriel and Di Natale figuring to play up front, however flexibility means Udinese can also operate in a 4-5-1 system.



THE COACH ANDREA STRAMACCONI

Once recognised as one of the brightest young Coaches in Italy, after guiding Inter's Primavera side to the NextGen title. He failed to live up to expectations bossing the senior team and was sacked after a 9th place finish in 2013 – now looking to get back on track in Udine.



CLUB LEGEND VALERIO BERTOTTO

The right-back from Turin is the most decorated player in Udinese history with a record 334 appearances. He provided defensive solidity from 1993-2006 and is, to date, the only captain in club history to lead the Zebrette to the group stages of the Champions League in 2005.



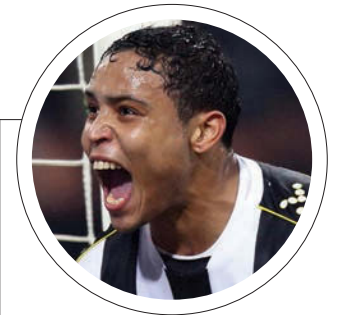
THE HOT PROSPECT SIMONE SCUFFET

Scuffet's rapid rise to the first team was one of the few bright spots in an otherwise forgettable season. Rejected the chance to join Spanish champions Atletico Madrid this summer in order to complete his academic studies and continue his tutelage in Serie A. A bright future awaits the 18-year-old.



THE CLUB ICON ANTONIO DI NATALE

The evergreen icon in Udine, talismanic captain Di Natale is still Udinese's biggest goal threat at the age of 36. Reconsidered his initial retirement plans to play on for at least one more season, he is just seven goals away from 200 in Serie A. Entering his 11th season for the Bianconeri.



THE DANGER MAN LUIS MURIEL

The Colombian international had a quiet campaign, netting just four goals last season. The 23-year-old will be looking to recapture his form from 2012-13 when he scored 11 times. Possesses lightening speed and technical ability and on his day is a handful for any defence.

SEASON OBJECTIVE

Udinese will find it extremely difficult to contend for a European spot with a relatively thin squad. The Bianconeri will be hoping to improve on last season's 13th place. A place in the top 10 will be the ambition for the new campaign.

CLUB NICKNAMES

Bianconeri, Zebrette, Friulani

CLUB STATISTICS

City (population)	Udinese (96,750)
Founded	1896
President	Franco Soldati
Club address	Viale Agostino e Angelo Candolini, 2,33100 Udine
Training HQ	Stadio Friuli, Viale Agostino e Angelo Candolini, 2, 33100 Udine
Team strip	Black & white striped shirts, black shorts & white socks
Club sponsor	Dacia
Kit sponsor	HS

CLUB RECORDS

Most-capped Italian	Antonio Di Natale – 39
Biggest signing	David Di Michele – £8.5m, Salernitana (2001)
Biggest sale	Alexis Sanchez – £28m, Barcelona (2012)

**FORM GUIDE**

Season	Division	League placing
2004-05	Serie A	4th
2005-06	Serie A	11th
2006-07	Serie A	10th
2007-08	Serie A	7th
2008-09	Serie A	7th
2009-10	Serie A	15th
2010-11	Serie A	4th
2011-12	Serie A	3rd
2012-13	Serie A	5th
2013-14	Serie A	13th

OVERALL SERIE A RECORD

Played 1410 | **Wins** 466 | **Draws** 422 | **Loss** 522
For 1810 | **Against** 1968 | **Goal Diff** -158 | **Pts** 1345

SERIE A RECORDS

Debut	1950-51
Top-flight campaigns	43
Best finish	3 rd (97-98/11-12)
Most appearances	Valerio Bertotto – 336
All-time top scorer	Antonio Di Natale – 175
Season's top scorer	Antonio Di Natale – 29 (09-10)
Most/least points	66 (2012-13) / 15 (86-87)
Biggest home win	7-0 v Napoli (57-58)
Biggest home defeat	0-6 v Inter (60-61)
Biggest away win	7-0 v Palermo (10-11)
Biggest away defeat	0-7 v Fiorentina & Milan (58-59)
Most/least wins	20 (2010-11) / 3 (79-80)
Most/least defeats	23 (61-62) / 4 (82-83)
Most/least goals	65 (2010-11) / 24 (79-80/80-81)
Most/least conceded	63 (61-62) / 29 (82-83)

QUESTION TIME WITH... ANDREA STRAMACCIONI**You have been named the new Coach of Udinese...**

"I'm very pleased. Udinese has always been my first choice and I think I did well to wait for the club. I'm convinced that I made the choice because this a club with a clear idea that football is unique in Europe. I'm happy that they are convinced that I am right for this place."

The club have shown faith in you...

"My agent Beppe Bozzo was helpful, I appreciate that Udinese also met with other Coaches, that makes my appointment stronger. I'm very happy, I feel adrenaline and I'm very motivated for the upcoming season."

You are used to working with young players...

"I think I'm enriched from the experience in the youth systems at Roma and Inter, my predisposition for working with youngsters could be an extra value. The first person to wish me good luck was my former President at Inter Massimo Moratti, I owe him a lot. Inter will always be part of my heart, but now my present is Udinese. At Inter there were more mature players. Here I will work on profiles not yet defined and my experience can be very useful."

You are replacing an iconic Coach in Guidolin...

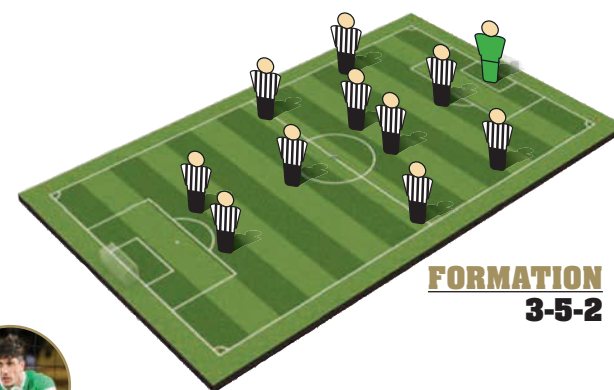
"For a young Coach like myself he can be a reference point. It's an honour to be chosen to replace a tactician that did so well in his career, especially at Udinese."

**ITALIAN CAPS :: DI NATALE****MOST APPS :: BERTOTTO (323)****BIGGEST SALE :: ALEXIS SANCHEZ - £28m, Barcelona (2012)****STADIUM INFO :: STADIO FRIULI**

Owned by the council, the Stadio Friuli has been Udinese's home stadium since it first opened in 1976. The arena hosted three group games during the 1990 FIFA World Cup, but it is now set for redevelopment. Heavy metal group Metallica performed here in 2012.



Pitch dimensions: 105m x 68m
Capacity: 30,642

**FORMATION 3-5-2****TEAM LINE-UP**

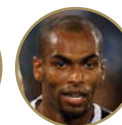
Suffet



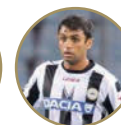
Heurtaux



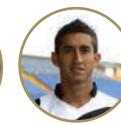
Domizzi



Naldo



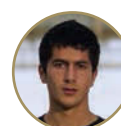
Danilo



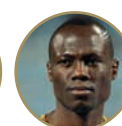
Pinzi



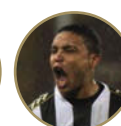
Allan



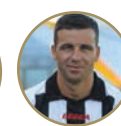
Kone



Agyemang-Badu



Muriel



Di Natale

ITALY'S GOT TALENT

With Serie A clubs increasingly preferring to trust older players, there seems to be less room for prodigious talent to develop. However, there are still a host of youngsters coming through as Luca Persico outlines.

SIMONE SCUFFET

GOALKEEPER, 18, UDINESE

In a whirlwind 12 months, Scuffet went from representing Italy at the U-17 World Cup in March to being in contention for a spot with the full national team in Brazil. Assured, agile and level-headed, the Udine native seemingly has the talent and mental strength to be Gianluigi Buffon's heir, while his decision to reject a move to Atletico Madrid and stay to play regularly with his hometown club shows great maturity. Scuffet's aim now is to have a strong campaign - he needs to iron out the odd mistake - and cement his place as Italy's most promising goalkeeper.



KEITA BALDE DIAO

FORWARD, 19, LAZIO

After starting out at Barcelona, Keita joined Lazio in July 2011. Paperwork issues meant he had to sit out a season, but he quickly came to the fore when he was finally allowed to play and helped the Primavera side win the Fase Finale. The Spaniard's contribution to that victory earned him his debut as a late substitute in a 3-0 win over Chievo Verona at the start of last term and he would go on to net six times in 35 appearances. Keita's form attracted interest from Liverpool over the summer, but he has chosen to stay with Lazio and is set to truly announce himself this term.



ANDREA BELOTTI

STRIKER, 20, PALERMO

Having broken through with 14 goals in 39 appearances as a teenager for Albinoleffe, Belotti was signed by Palermo last summer to help their promotion push. After being an unused substitute for three matches, he showed his worth with an assist for Kyle Lafferty in a 2-1 defeat at Bari and would go on to score in a 1-1 draw with Brescia two weeks later. Throughout the campaign, Belotti was in and out of the side, but his return of 10 goals in 25 appearances highlights his talent. With Abel Hernandez a tad inconsistent, he could be Palermo's most pertinent offensive weapon this term.



NICOLA MURRU

DEFENDER, 19, CAGLIARI

He may have just turned 19, but the Cagliari native has already made 39 appearances for his home-town club. In a League where young players sometimes have to wait until their 20s to get a chance, Murru was handed his debut as a 17-year-old in a 2-0 defeat to Chievo Verona. Over the past two seasons, he has battled past Danilo Avelar to become Cagliari's first choice left-back. With Zdenek Zeman now at the helm, Murru's defensive qualities will be pushed to the limit this season, but if he can continue to impress then the big clubs will come calling.



ALESSIO ROMAGNOLI

DEFENDER, 19, SAMPDORIA

A regular with Italy at Under-16, 17, 19 and 21 levels, the Anzio-native is considered one of Serie A's brightest defenders. A centre-back by trade, Romagnoli covered at left full-back last season for Roma and was handed 15 appearances in all competitions. Despite breaking through, he was surprisingly loaned to Sampdoria this summer. The Blucerchiati have an option to sign him outright for €2m, but if he impresses, Roma can bring him back for just €750,000. If Romagnoli can replicate his form from last term, his stay in Genoa shouldn't be a long one.



PAULO DYBALA

STRIKER, 20, PALERMO

Signed from Instituto ACC in July 2012 for €11.9m, Dybala is now ready to prove his worth in Italy. The Argentine's debut season at Palermo yielded just three goals, with the responsibility of being Edinson Cavani's heir seemingly too much for the youngster. Last term, in Serie B, he managed only five goals, but Coach Beppe Iachini has faith in Dybala and his talent remains obvious. The diminutive attacker is very much in the mould of his countryman Sergio Aguero and, with the right support, he can be key to keeping Palermo in the top flight.



DANIELE RUGANI

DEFENDER, 20, EMPOLI

Having started out at Empoli, Rugani was signed by Juventus on loan in July 2012 and subsequently outright a year later. Last season, he was loaned back to the Serie B outfit and was instrumental in helping them gain promotion. Rugani made 40 appearances at the heart of a young Tuscan side and showed maturity beyond his years. The Sesto di Moriano native, who was capped by the Azzurrini in March, has remained with Empoli this term and is expected to further enhance his growing reputation.



ROBIN QUAISON

MIDFIELDER, 20, PALERMO

For a player so young, Quaison boasts a wealth of experience. The Stockholm native has already made 63 appearances for AIK and scored twice in four caps for Sweden. His impressive CV attracted the interest of Palermo this summer and the newly-promoted side parted with €2m in June to bring him in. A central midfielder by trade, Quaison is adept both defensively and going forward, while his energy and incisive passing will be useful in a workmanlike side.



FEDERICO BERNARDESCHI

FORWARD, 20, FIORENTINA

Bernardeschi's excellent form on loan at Crotone last season saw him come into contention for an unlikely Azzurri call up. The winger, who matches trickery with a turn of pace, managed 12 goals in 39 appearances with the Pitagorici and has unsurprisingly been recalled by Fiorentina. With Coach Vincenzo Montella trying to balance a squad to fight in three different competitions, Bernardeschi should be given room to impress, though the arrival of Marko Marin has provided him with some unwelcome competition.



ALSO WATCH OUT FOR...

Hachim Mastour (Milan), Kingsley Coman (Juventus), Salih Ucan (Roma), Alberto Cerri (Parma), Gaston Silva (Torino), Marco Benassi (Torino), Emerson (Palermo), Valerio Rosseti (Atalanta), Caio Rangel (Cagliari) and Luca Garritano (Cesena).



More
Lightness

DD-NA 2 GLX 14

Let your feet breathe
thanks to
the innovative
**NET
BREATHING
SYSTEM™**
GEOX®
licensed technology

Net Breathing System

SAID, DONE.



DIADORA

THE HOT LISTS

Sam Lewis lists the players who will be battling injuries, expectation and Father Time during Serie A 2014-15

FITNESS FIRST

PLAYERS WHO MUST PROVE FITNESS AFTER LAST SEASON...



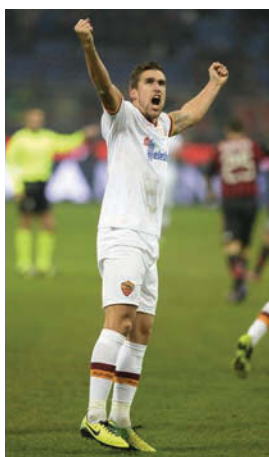
STEPHAN EL SHAARAWY

The attacking wide player missed a huge swathe of last season after having an operation on his right foot in December that kept him out of Milan's team until May. Without Mario Balotelli, the Rossoneri will be counting on him this season.



GIUSEPPE ROSSI

A first full season in Florence was looking like the best of Rossi's career until knee ligament damage kept him out until just before the season's conclusion and cost him a World Cup spot. The 27-year-old will have Viola hopes pinned on his fitness.



KEVIN STROOTMAN

The Dutch maestro also missed out on the World Cup after his March knee injury. Prior to that, Strootman was the leading candidate to be the best midfielder in Serie A following his switch to Roma. His return alongside Daniele De Rossi and Miralem Pjanic will be key to a Giallorosso title challenge.



MARIO GOMEZ

The German forward couldn't keep fit last term, denying Serie A fans the chance to properly see how a Rossi-Gomez tandem would've worked. With both Gomez and Rossi coming back from injury, 2014-15 may bring that opportunity.



LUIS MURIEL

The exciting Colombian battled fitness and form all season in what was primed to be the forward's break-out campaign. With Antonio Di Natale also returning for the Zebre, Muriel could be one half of the League's most entertaining strike-forces.

YOUNG GUNS

PLAYERS WHO MUST BUILD ON THE POTENTIAL OF THEIR 2013-14 SEASON...



FRANCESCO BARDI

Bardi has emerged as one of the League's most exciting talents after winning a starting job at Livorno while on-loan from Inter. Slowly moving up in Serie A, Bardi now has the chance to impress between the sticks for Chievo.



DOMENICO BERARDI

The man who ended the Massimiliano Allegri reign at Milan with his four goal performance against the Rossoneri in January will head into next season with all eyes on him. Berardi could work his way into the Italy set-up with another impressive campaign, but expectations are high of the Juventus-owned talent.



MATTIA PERIN

The long haired Genoa 'keeper was reportedly close to a big money move to Milan in summer, but the shot-stopper will have another chance to rise up the shopping lists of some of Europe's bigger clubs as starter for the Grifone. Can he live up to the challenge?



JUAN ITURBE

Earned his move to Roma with a collection of stunning displays for Hellas Verona as the club were the surprise of Serie A last season. Battling Gervinho, Alessandro Florenzi and Francesco Totti for playing time will be difficult, however. He will be a tantalising prospect for the Giallorossi this season.



JORGINHO

Was another Verona star until a January move to Napoli and he has slotted well into the rotation under Rafa Benitez. Calm and composed on the ball with great awareness, the absence of truly excellent players in Napoli's midfield could see Jorginho flourish as a starter.

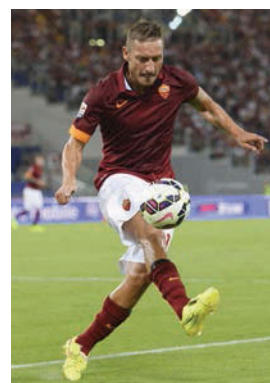
OLD TIMERS

THE AGEING STARS STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE...



LUCA TONI

Enjoyed a resurgent year that had many clamouring for an Italy call-up prior to the World Cup, as Toni scored 20 goals during a season that many thought would be his last in Serie A. Now 37, can Toni repeat the trick? Verona fans certainly hope so.



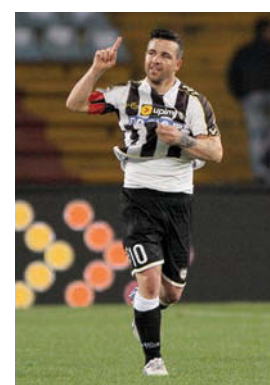
FRANCESCO TOTTI

The seemingly ageless Totti had another vintage year for Roma, pulling the strings as the Giallorossi came close to a first Serie A title since 2001. With the clock ticking on Er Pupone's career, it's time to truly appreciate what one of Italian football's greatest players brings to the game.



MIROSLAV KLOSE

Fresh from becoming the World Cup's greatest ever goalscorer while he and his German teammates won the planet's biggest tournament, Klose is probably going to be in good spirits heading back to Rome this season. At the sprightly age of 36, Klose has shown no signs of slowing down.



ANTONIO DI NATALE

Toto sent a huge sigh of relief through Udine when he decided to come back for another year after originally announcing his retirement, but in doing so he cancelled out an equally relieved sigh from calcio's centre-backs, who have another season dealing with one of the League's best forwards.



GIANLUIGI BUFFON & ANDREA PIRLO

Both still outrunning Father Time in Turin - although Andrea is perhaps trotting past him at this point - Pirlo and Buffon have been staples of Italian football that so far have shown no evidence of losing their magic. Once again, expect a few jaw dropping saves and free-kicks along the way from two of Serie A's greatest servants.





beIN
SPORTS

THE
INTERNATIONAL
SPORTS NETWORK



LIVE EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE

TO SUBSCRIBE GO TO beINSPORTS.TV



Q & A WITH THE NEW BOYS

Soccer Italia goes one on one with some of the new transfers coming into Serie A this season.

NEMANJA VIDIC

INTER WASTED NO TIME IN SNAPPING UP NEMANJA VIDIC AFTER HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD NOT BE RENEWING HIS CONTRACT AT MANCHESTER UNITED. HERE HE EXPLAINS WHY HE OPTED FOR A SWITCH TO SERIE A

WHY DID YOU QUIT OLD TRAFFORD?

"After nine years at United, where I achieved nearly everything possible both at an individual and team level, I felt it was time for a new challenge in my career. Something that will improve my motivation. I want to show that I'm capable of performing as well in Italy as I was able to in England. Plus, Italy is a nice country, and it's nearer to my home. Hopefully I can learn a new language as well! There are lots of reasons."

WHAT WERE THE REASONS WHY YOU CHOSE INTER AS YOUR NEXT STEP?

"Inter are one of the biggest clubs in the world. It has a great tradition and has won many trophies at domestic and international level, including three Champions League titles – how many other clubs have done that? There is a new project here with a new owner and I immediately liked the idea of being a part of it."

DID DEJAN STANKOVIC INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO COME HERE?

"I spoke to Dejan about coming, yes, but he's not the only Serbian player to have donned these colours. I'd like to continue this tradition of Serbian players at Inter. I spoke to other Serbians who have played elsewhere in Italy and they said it's the right move for me."

BOSS WALTER MAZZARRI HAS TRADITIONALLY PLAYED WITH A THREE-MAN DEFENCE...

"I haven't played in a three-man backline before, but a defender is a defender and three or four at the back is the same thing. I will try my best to adapt to whatever system the Coach wants to play."

IS IT BETTER TO HAVE GREAT DEFENDERS OR A GREAT DEFENSIVE SET-UP?

"Definitely it's the system that brings out the best in the players. In the past at all the clubs I've been at it's never been about just one player. When I had a good year I depended on my teammates. Individuals can perform well when they're alongside good players, at a good club with a good atmosphere. That's something that any club that wants to achieve things needs."



PABLO D. OSVALDO

PABLO DANIEL OSVALDO IS NOW AT HIS NINTH CLUB IN NINE YEARS AFTER COMPLETING A LOAN MOVE TO INTER FROM SOUTHAMPTON. SOCCER ITALIA CAUGHT UP WITH THE EX-ROMA AND JUVENTUS MAN

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON JOINING INTER?

"It's an honour to join a club like Inter and I can't wait to get started. I think anyone would jump at the chance if Inter came calling."

YOU'VE HAD YOUR DIFFICULTIES OVER THE LAST FEW SEASONS. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE AT THIS CLUB ON A PERSONAL LEVEL?

"I really want to be a key performer again. I'm determined to get back to playing as I know I can – and show what I can do in this shirt. My aim is to work hard and let the pitch do the talking. This is a big opportunity for me and if I perform well this season then I could stay here for many years."

YOU WILL POTENTIALLY BE LINING UP ALONGSIDE MAURO ICARDI IN 2014-15. ANY THOUGHTS ON YOUR NEW TEAMMATE?

"He's a fantastic player, I rate him a lot. He's a skilful player too and I don't think we'll have any problems playing together. It will be up to the Coach now, but it is great to play for a tactician who has always wanted me."

ANOTHER ARGENTINE, DIEGO MILITO, HAS MEANWHILE LEFT THE CLUB...

"It would be great to be able to achieve what he did here. He's someone I look up to as an example."

YOU'VE BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE ATTACK, WHILE GARY MEDEL HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE CLUB'S DEFENSIVE OPTIONS.

"I've known about him since he was at Boca. He brings quality and lots of power."

YOU SPENT THE SECOND HALF OF LAST SEASON ON LOAN WITH CHAMPIONS JUVENTUS AFTER DIFFICULTIES AT SOUTHAMPTON...

"It was a strange season for me, but I'm trying to look forward not back. I don't really know what happened. Maybe I failed to adapt to English football and then joining another club midway through the year is never easy. And then I didn't get any sort of continuity at Juve because of Fernando Llorente and Carlos Tevez. I won the League though, which is always nice, but hopefully at Inter I can exceed those emotions."

ASHLEY COLE

AVAILABLE ON A FREE TRANSFER AFTER HIS CONTRACT AT CHELSEA EXPIRED, ROMA MADE A DECISIVE MOVE FOR EXPERIENCED LEFT-BACK ASHLEY COLE

YOU'VE CHOSEN ROMA AS YOUR NEW CLUB. WHAT MADE YOU TAKE SUCH A STEP?

"I decided to come here because I want to keep playing in the Champions League. I'm joining an ambitious club that has signed some very experienced players and I'm ready to fight for my place."

NOT MANY ENGLISH PLAYERS HAVE MOVED TO SERIE A IN THE PAST...

"I think English players perhaps feel in their comfort zone in England. It's a big opportunity for me to try a different language, culture and way of living. I'm happy with my choice."

WHY LEAVE CHELSEA? HOW WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JOSE MOURINHO?

"I've always had a good relationship with him. I understand that he was perhaps looking for something else and my time at Chelsea had come to an end. As soon as I spoke to Rudi Garcia and I saw how much they wanted me here at Roma, I jumped at the chance. Hopefully we can do something special next season and win the League."

ARE THERE ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MOURINHO AND GARCIA?

"It's too early to say, ask me again in six months' time. I've had some great managers in my time and I'm sure I'll work with another one here at Roma."

THERE IS QUITE A LOT OF PRESSURE IN ITALIAN FOOTBALL, ESPECIALLY IN THE ITALIAN CAPITAL. DOES THAT WORRY YOU?

"I'm not afraid of pressure. I spent 14 years at the top level in England fighting to win things and for my place in the team. I noticed the Roma fans' passion and love as soon as I landed. I can't wait to play at the Olimpico and feel the fans' support. I'm going to enjoy my time here."



PATRICE EVRA

AFTER YEARS OF SEARCHING FOR A QUALITY LEFT-BACK, JUVENTUS HAVE PICKED UP FRENCH INTERNATIONAL PATRICE EVRA FROM MANCHESTER UNITED

DID YOU TAKE MUCH CONVINCING IN LEAVING MANCHESTER UNITED FOR JUVENTUS?

"When I heard Juventus were interested, I immediately knew it was the right choice for me. This club is indicative of a winning culture and the pressure that goes along with it doesn't faze me. Winning is in my DNA, I've succeeded at Manchester United and I want to do the same at all costs with Juventus."

YOU STARTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER IN ITALY BEFORE SPENDING NINE YEARS AT OLD TRAFFORD...

"First of all, I owe everything to Italy because it's the country that gave me my first foray into professional football. Some of my best memories are from my time at Marsala. I won everything with Manchester United, but Marsala was like a family for me, especially seeing as I joined when I was just 17."

THERE IS ONE FAMILIAR FACE IN THE JUVENTUS SQUAD FOR YOU - FORMER UNITED TEAMMATE CARLOS TEVEZ.

"We're great friends, both on and off the pitch. I was so happy to see him do well when he joined the Bianconeri last year. Carlitos is a true champion who is always hungry for more success. As soon as I arrived here, he came up to me and said 'Patrice, we have to work hard to achieve our targets at Juve'. He's someone capable of getting the team going in moments when they might be easing up."

JUVENTUS WILL BE LOOKING TO MAKE IT FOUR CONSECUTIVE SCUDETTI THIS SEASON. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU OF ACHIEVING THAT SUCCESS?

"I think we'll have to work hard because it's certainly not an easy task. I won three consecutive titles at United, but achieving four in a row is much tougher and a real challenge."

HAVING DOMINATED SERIE A FOR THE LAST THREE SEASONS, JUVENTUS WILL ALSO BE LOOKING TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION ON THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE.

"It's a great competition to play in, but it's difficult to win. A good start is paramount in having a strong run, otherwise you'll struggle. We won't start saying that we'll win it, but we'll give our all in order to have a successful run. I reached the Final on four separate occasions and there's a fine line between winning and losing in such a competition."



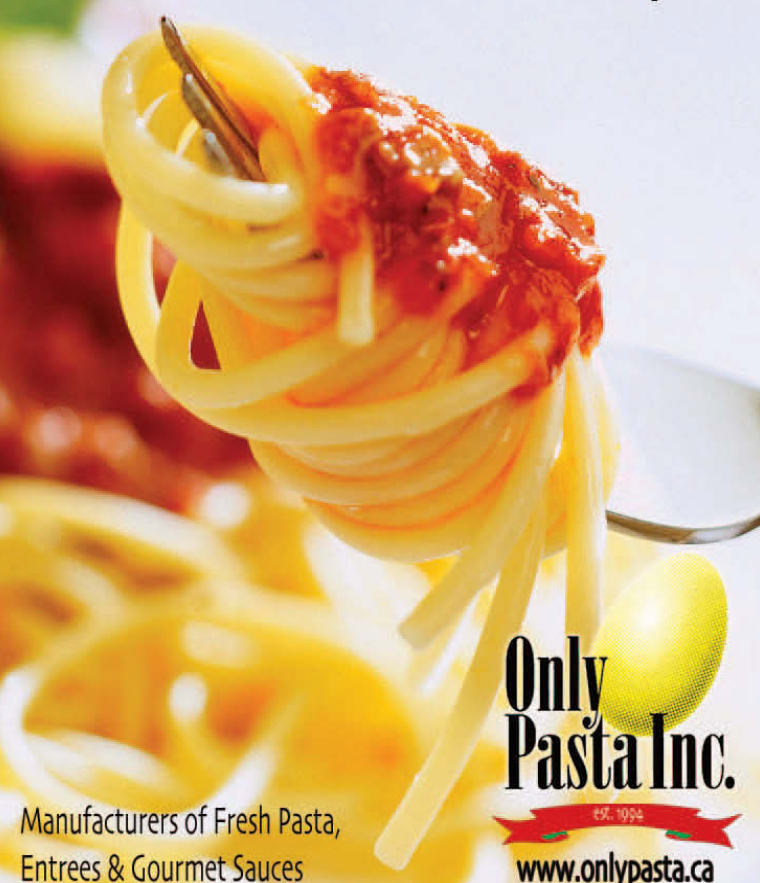

"Winners of Ford's prestigious President's Award for outstanding sales and service 27 times...more than any other Toronto Ford dealer"



"All Ford's are created equal...it's the dealership that makes the difference"

SUMMIT FORD
12 Carrier Drive (On Highway 27 just south of the 407)
Call Direct: 310-FORD (3673) • www.summitford.com

The Fresh Pasta Shop!



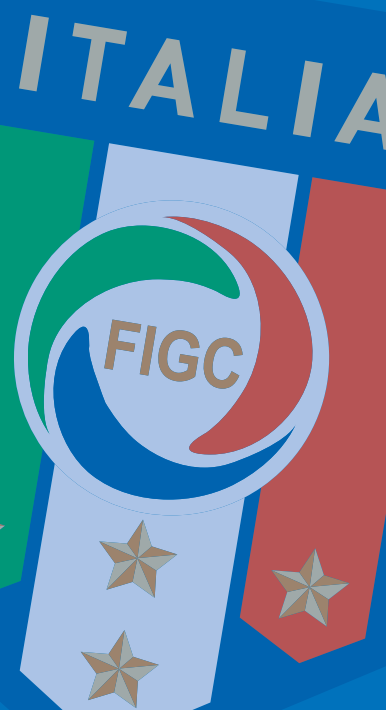
Only Pasta Inc.
est. 1994

Manufacturers of Fresh Pasta,
Entrees & Gourmet Sauces

www.onlypasta.ca
457 Jevlan Drive - Unit 1, Woodbridge, Ontario • Tel: 905-856-4499

ITALY TURN TO CONTE

Antonio Conte has replaced Cesare Prandelli as Italy boss. Alex Mott profiles the Scudetto-winning tactician who now needs to revive the Azzurri



It was the news nobody expected and then the announcement that everyone saw coming. On July 15, 2014, just six weeks ahead of the new Serie A season, Antonio Conte shocked the football world by announcing his decision to quit as Juventus Coach. "It may be more difficult to keep winning with Juventus in the future," he said. "I have matured with time and my feelings led me to make this choice."

After three titles in three seasons, in which he and his side redefined what it meant to win in Italy's top-flight – going unbeaten in 2011-12 and breaking the 100 point barrier in 2013-14 – the former midfielder admitted his time in the Bianconeri dugout was over.

Giorgio Chiellini was 'amazed', Andrea Agnelli was 'deeply saddened' and Kwadwo Asamoah was 'shocked'. Everyone involved with the champions was almost in mourning at the news, but those not deeply entangled with the Turinese outfit saw Conte's decision as a blessing. Not only was Serie A set for a more even contest this time around, but the national team was about to get a top-class addition.

After Cesare Prandelli's decision to resign following the embarrassment that was World Cup 2014, it seemed almost inevitable that Conte would be handed the Azzurri reins. All that was standing in the way was the FIGC's Presidential election.

"CONTE IS BEING THROWN IN AT THE DEEP END, BUT THEN, YOU COULD HAVE SAID THAT THREE YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS HANDED THE JUVENTUS JOB"

The Federation took nearly seven weeks to convene and decide on a candidate to lead Italian football post-Brazil. Giancarlo Abete had fallen on his sword along with Prandelli, so it was between septuagenarian Carlo Tavecchio and sprightly former Milan midfielder Demetrio Albertini as to whom would take on the mantle of guiding calcio out of its darkest hour.

As is the case on the peninsula though, nothing is ever that simple. Tavecchio was heard making alleged racist remarks towards foreign players coming to Italy, whilst Roma and Juve stood firm in their belief that neither candidate was really that suitable. Other teams – Parma, Cesena, Atalanta – went back and forth, condemning Tavecchio and then backing him. But on August 11, the leader of amateur football in the country took charge of the professional game after two rounds of voting. And almost immediately the 71-year-old confirmed that he was 'working on' getting Conte to take charge of the Azzurri.

Rumours abounded that kit manufacturer Puma were stumping up some of the cash that would pay the 45-year-old's €4m wages – but everyone, from Dino Zoff to Carlo Ancelotti agreed that the ex-Juve boss was the right man to lead La Nazionale. "He won three League titles in great style in Italy and I think the decision is very apt," the former goalkeeper said. The Real Madrid Coach, meanwhile, claimed: "The appointment will be good for the whole of Italian football."

On Tuesday August 19, however, all the talking and speculating



Antonio Conte won three straight Scudetti with Juventus, breaking countless records along the way



Antonio Conte is likely to initially turn to some familiar faces as he looks to rebuild the Azzurri

was finally put to bed. At a Press conference in Rome, with Tavecchio and director general Antonello Valentini alongside him, Conte was finally unveiled as the man that would lead Italy into Euro 2016.

Tavecchio insisted he was bringing in the 'best Coach in Europe'. The man himself though, admitted that his first thought when leaving Turin was to travel around Europe and wait for another big job on the continent.

National team management has, traditionally, been the domain of the older Coach - left to those who have been around the block and are happy to only have face-to-face time on the training pitch once every few months. That doesn't, from the outside, seem to be Conte's style, so it will be interesting to see how the ex-midfielder copes with the hands-off nature of managing an international side. But as he conceded himself after putting pen to paper, the challenge of managing the Azzurri was just too good an opportunity to pass up.

"I am excited and I cannot deny it, because in my place would sit any Coach in the world," he told reporters. "This is the most important national team together with that of Brazil, with four stars on its badge. I am proud of the fact that the President has considered me."

"I never expected to return to coaching after 35 days. I wanted to take a break around Europe, update myself and improve my studies of different languages, and wait for a top European club."

"THERE'S NO DOUBTING THAT THE ONE-TIME MIDFIELDER WAS THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB, AND AS A PATRIOT, IT'S ADMIRABLE THAT HE'S OPTED FOR THE NATIONAL TEAM POST"

"Then came a phone call from Italy, which is a top, top club, and after taking the necessary reflection, I understood the enthusiasm of Tavecchio and by the second phone call he knew that he had made inroads into my heart."

"You know that I like challenges. I repeat - I have the privilege of being in this position in which everyone would like to be."

There's no doubting Conte's credentials, but the Lecce-native inherits a squad that has been tarnished from its experiences in the summer. Italy went into the World Cup filled with hope - a new generation that would build on its undoubted promise.

The catastrophic crashing out at the group stage will leave a dent, much like it did in 2010. But unlike Marcello Lippi that year, there's no casting out of the old and in with the youthful. The Azzurri have already attempted to integrate the youngsters before the tournament, and to banish them now would be a waste of talent and frankly idiotic.

Conte then has the unenviable task of building up egos and massaging confidence. All that whilst trying to qualify for Euro 2016. Admittedly, their qualifying group isn't one that will strike too much fear, but trips to Croatia, Norway and Bulgaria won't be easy.

The Coach is being thrown in at the deep end, but then, you could have said that three years ago when he was handed the Juventus job. The Old Lady had gone, post Calciopoli, nine years without a trophy at that point - but there he was, leading them to an unbeaten campaign and an almost unparalleled sequence of success.

There's no doubting that the one-time captain was the best man for the job, and as a patriot, it's admirable that he's opted for the national team post. But one has to wonder what will become of Conte should he not be a success with the Azzurri. Prandelli was seen as one of the best tacticians in Europe post Euro 2012 - he, reportedly, turned down some of the continent's biggest teams in order to stay. And then, in the aftermath of the World Cup car crash, quit and had to accept the Galatasaray post.

If that's a forerunner for Conte in two years' time it will be very sad indeed. But if his spell at Juventus is anything to go by, perhaps not.

GROUP E HERO?

Antonio Conte will try to lift the Azzurri, and become an international hero making the fans forget about Brazil 2014.

**EURO 2016
FRANCE**



TM

**QUALIFICATION
FIXTURES**

09/09/14 Norway v Italy
10/10/14 Italy v Azerbaijan
13/10/14 Malta v Italy
16/11/14 Italy v Croatia
28/03/15 Bulgaria v Italy
12/06/15 Croatia v Italy
03/09/15 Italy v Malta
06/09/15 Italy v Bulgaria
10/10/15 Azerbaijan v Italy
13/10/15 Italy v Norway



**BOLTON
TOYOTA**

Serving the Brampton, Caledon & Vaughan areas.



2014 Toyota Venza



2014 Toyota Camry

get up to
\$7000 in cash incentives on
select 2014 models



2014 Toyota Rav4



2014 Toyota Corolla

DILAWRI
CANADA'S LARGEST
AUTOMOTIVE GROUP



BOLTON TOYOTA

12050 Albion Vaughan Road
(Highway 50 & Mayfield)
Bolton, Ontario, L7E 1S7
Phone : 905.857.4100
www.boltontoyota.com

Proud Supporters of

SickKids





Simone Zaza scored his first goal for Italy as the Azzurri kicked off their 2016 European qualifying campaign with a 2-0 victory over Norway. Did the youngster score because of Conte's teachings...?

"CONTE'S APPROACH IS VERY TIRING, BUT IF YOU WANT TO DO WELL AND PLAY AS A TEAM, THEN YOU HAVE TO RUN. THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE."



Managerial Factfile

Name: Antonio Conte

Born: 31/7/1969

Season	Club	Div	Pos
2006-07	Arezzo	Serie B	21st
2007-08	Bari	Serie B	13th
2008-09	Bari	Serie B	1st
2009-10	Atalanta	Serie A	-
2010-11	Siena	Serie B	2nd
2011-12	Juventus	Serie A	1st
2012-13	Juventus	Serie A	1st
2013-14	Juventus	Serie A	1st



The coaching veteran has an impressive resume. Conte will be looking to make it shine even more with a few International championships.

Conte's Mario problem

Antonio Conte has one headache to solve in his first few months as Azzurri boss. Soccer Italia looks at how the Coach can get the best out of Mario Balotelli...

Antonio Conte inherits a number of problems as Italy boss following the catastrophic World Cup in Brazil. But perhaps the most pertinent one will be the future of Mario Balotelli in the famous blue shirt. The new Liverpool striker has long hinted at what potential he could have, but that has often been offset by problems away from the pitch and childish behaviour on it.

His time in South America this summer was a perfect microcosm of what the goalscorer's career up to date has been like. A beautiful winning goal against England, before anonymous displays against Costa Rica and Uruguay. Cesare Prandelli couldn't seem to get the best out of the 23-year-old, so can Conte?

Reports in the Gazzetta dello Sport suggest that the tactician will go down hard on the striker should he step out of line, with a number of potential replacements in the wings. The pink paper believes that a number of bad performances will see Mario excluded from the group, and youngsters like Mattia Destro, Lorenzo Insigne and Ciro Immobile given a proper chance to shine.



Perfect Pirlo back for Italy?

Soccer Italia consider the impact Andrea Pirlo could have. Should Antonio Conte bring him back into the fold...

Antonio Conte's announcement as the new Italy boss could turn out to be a complete failure. It may be an unmitigated disaster that sees the Azzurri fail to qualify for Euro 2016, with all involved turning their backs on the national team and never stepping foot on the peninsula again.

But it will all be worth it should he persuade Andrea Pirlo to come out of international retirement and pull on that famous blue shirt again. The veteran midfielder will undoubtedly go down as one of the greatest of all time when he hangs up his boots - and that seemed to have come after the World Cup when he confirmed to reporters that the tournament in Brazil would be his last. But following Conte's arrival in the international dugout, the 35-year-old has admitted that he would be tempted to team up with his old club boss and represent the country at one more competition.

"He is a champion and for me a great point of reference," Conte told reporters in Rome. "He is among those who are in contention, but it is inevitable that, given his statements after the World Cup, that we must talk to him to understand what he feels and also he must hear what I have to say."





UNITED
COLOURS OF



VIVA ITALIA!

CANADA'S BIGGEST PAINT STORE • VISIT OUR NEW 20,000 SQ.FT. SUPERCENTRE



Our full line of products and services will make your life more colourful

When you need the biggest selection of paints, colours, wallpapers, equipment, accessories, stains and anything else to do with your decor, the only place you need to go is Steeles Paint. Our free in-store professional colour consultations will help you with every project, whether you need to mix and match exact colours or design your interior. Visit us today to bring the right colours into your life.



4190 Steeles Avenue • East of Pine Valley Drive
905-850-4040 • www.steelespaint.com

Mon - Fri: 6:30 am to 6:00 pm • Sat: 7:30 am to 5:00 pm • Sun: Closed

THE COACHES

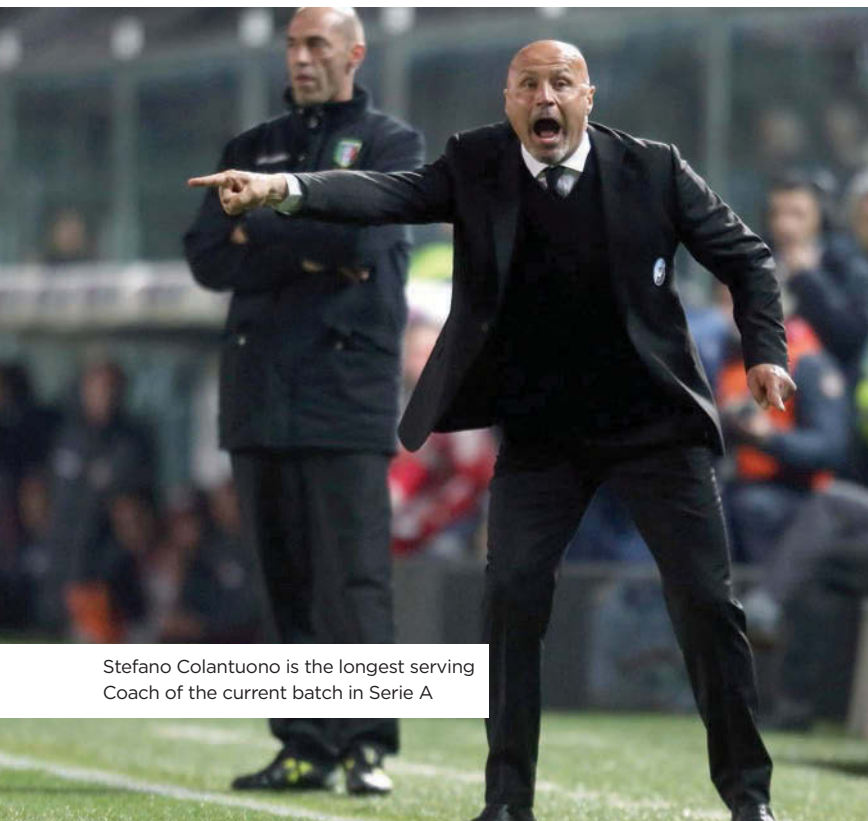
The annual coaching landscape has seen its fair share of changes ahead of the new Serie A year. Lorenzo Vicini breaks down the coaching appointments for the 2014-15 season

THE MEN ON THE BENCH

Legendary Serbian and long-time Serie A boss Vujadin Boskov once proclaimed: "Coaches are like opera singers. There are many of them, and even good ones, but only two or three can sing at La Scala in Milan." Boskov's quote rings true as Serie A gets set to kick off. There are 20 Coaches ready for a season full of drama and excitement. When it's all said and done, that number will undoubtedly grow as tacticians are sacrificed at the expense of unsatisfactory results. Without further ado, here are the men who will lead their clubs in hopes of singing at La Scala at season's end...

THE SENIORS

Despite what one would expect, Serie A's longest tenured Coaches are not the ones in charge of the country's biggest clubs. Atalanta's Stefano Colantuono holds the title as the League's longest serving tactician. The Bergamaschi boss will enter his fifth consecutive season with the club and his seventh overall after previously coaching the Orobici from 2005 to 2007. Having spent such a long time with one club is no small feat in a place as tumultuous as the Serie A landscape and Colantuono has claimed he's practically Bergamascan-born at this point. Slotting in right behind Colantuono is Verona's Andrea Mandorlini who will also be entering his fifth season at the helm. The man is already a legend for the Butei, having taken the club from Lega Pro to Serie A in that span. Endeared to the fan base and coming off a fantastic record-breaking debut season in the top flight, Mandorlini should continue to lead the Mastini. For Torino's Giampiero Ventura, his first venture on the Granata bench was met with plenty of scepticism from the club's supporters. Yet, four seasons later, Ventura answered his critics emphatically by taking Torino from Serie B to participating in this season's Europa League. Roberto Donadoni is easily the most recognizable name amongst the veteran Coaches, thanks to his legendary playing career with Milan and his brief stint on the Italian national team bench from 2006 to 2008. After a short experience with Napoli and a season with Cagliari, Donadoni finally found his coaching chops with Parma when he replaced Franco Colomba in January of 2012. Three and a half seasons later, Donadoni has established himself as a respectable Coach with excellent potential off the back of an impressive sixth place finish last term. Rounding out the list of veterans is Genoa's Gian Piero Gasperini. Technically, the upcoming season will only mark his second consecutive year on the bench, but Gasperini is no unfamiliar face to the Ligurian side having coached them from 2006 to 2010.



Stefano Colantuono is the longest serving Coach of the current batch in Serie A



Vincenzo Montella is seen as a master tactician of the future

THE JUNIORS

Arguably the best young Coach in Italy, Vincenzo Montella is set to begin his third season with Fiorentina. The 40-year-old was a renowned player for Sampdoria and Roma, but he's on the path to greatness as a tactician. With consecutive 4th place finishes for the Viola, it would be no surprise if Montella ends up at an even bigger club should his side see success once more. Chievo's Eugenio Corini is also entering his third season with the Flying Donkeys. However, Corini didn't actually begin last season on the bench as his contract wasn't renewed the previous year. Nevertheless, he took over from Giuseppe Sannino last November and navigated Chievo to safety. His achievement was rewarded with a contract renewal till June 2017. Whether Corini makes it until then is another question entirely. Similar to Corini, Sassuolo's Eusebio Di Francesco is heading into his third year. Di Francesco helped the Neroverdi to an historic promotion but found life tough in the top flight. The bespectacled tactician was actually sacked last January but was recalled to the bench in March. The move proved to be wise as Di Francesco helped Sassuolo avoid a near-certain relegation. He'll hope this season's prospects look better. Maurizio Sarri is a newcomer to Serie A but the Empoli man is entering his third season in charge. Never one to shy away from his thoughts, Sarri's introduction to the top flight will be worth a sound bite or two. Cesena are back in Serie A thanks to Pierpaolo Bisoli who happened to lead them to their promotion the last time around in 2009. He never coached the club in the top flight though, choosing to move to Cagliari and then Bologna. Now, he's back for a third consecutive season with the Seahorses and finally leading them in Serie A after obtaining promotion by winning the Serie B play-offs.

THE SOPHOMORES

Five of Serie A's 20 Coaches are entering their sophomore seasons with their clubs. Inter's Walter Mazzarri will be expected to improve upon last season's 5th place finish. The successful ex-Napoli boss saw plenty of positives and negatives in his first attempt with the Nerazzurri. However, an ambitious top club will be looking for a spot in the Champions League this season as new owner Erick Thohir promises a return to greatness for the Beneamata. Mazzarri's replacement at Napoli, Rafa Benitez, faces a similar situation with a club that has high expectations. The Partenopei finished third and won the Coppa Italia under the watchful, tactful eye of the Spaniard in his first year. This time around, the goal is a Scudetto. Roma was the revelation of the season under the Frenchman Rudi Garcia. Not only did he mark his debut in Italy with 10 straight wins, he led the Giallorossi to a phenomenal 2nd place finish when nobody expected it. It won't be as easy in his second year as Roma hopes to win the Scudetto rather than simply compete for it. Garcia's brilliant leadership and soft-spoken demeanour has been a breath of fresh air in Italy but he must now prove last season wasn't a fluke. No longer afforded the luxury of operating under the radar, Garcia and Roma must take a big step forward in the 2014-15 season. Palermo's Beppe Iachini replaced Gennaro Gattuso early on last season and led the Rosanero to a record-breaking promotion to Serie A. The fiery nature of Palermo President Maurizio Zamparini means Iachini will need to find success early and often if he is to stay on the bench. Sampdoria's Sinisa Mihajlovic replaced his predecessor Delio Rossi in November of last season and led the Blucerchiati to a comfortable 12th place finish. The ex-Sampdoria player will hope to build upon last season.



Walter Mazzarri will be expected to build on his first season at Inter



Unemployed in pre-season, Massimiliano Allegri was thrust into the Juventus hotseat after the departure of Antonio Conte

THE FRESHMEN

Much like the sophomores, five clubs have new Coaches heading into the season. Udinese appointed young and promising Andrea Stramaccioni of Inter fame to the Zebrette bench. Replacing a prosperous tactician like Francesco Guidolin will be a tall order, but Stramaccioni seems to line up perfectly with the club's goals and ideals. He also has the chance to restore an image that was unfairly tarnished while coaching Inter. For Stefano Pioli, Lazio provided the ex-Bologna boss with an aspiring project and a bigger club than anything he's experienced previously. Cagliari made headlines when they appointed the inimitable Zdenek Zeman as Coach. Zemanlandia is back in Serie A after a one year absence and promises to be full of plenty of entertainment as always. Despite every aforementioned Coach, all eyes will be on two men making debuts for their respective clubs. The first is Pippo Inzaghi at Milan. The Rossoneri were a mess last season, sacking Massimiliano Allegri and using placeholder Mauro Tassotti until Clarence Seedorf arrived. Seedorf stumbled his way to the end of the season before it was decided he would not stay on for the following season, in spite of a lucrative contract. Now, the duties fall to another club legend with no prior senior level coaching experience in Pippo. For Inzaghi, he has the desire to succeed but will he be given the tools to do so? A short distance away in another city, a different question is being asked. How do you replace a man like Antonio Conte? Conte's shock resignation at Juventus left the three-peat champions scrambling for a Coach in mid-July. Conte's successor, Max Allegri, was the same man who was the scapegoat for Milan's problems the previous season. Allegri arguably faces the hardest task of all. Anything less than a Scudetto will be deemed a failure while success will be demanded in the Champions League to boot. It's perhaps an unenviable task, but Allegri has embraced the challenge with open arms.

ZAFFERANO — RISTORANTE —

THE BEST OF ITALIAN CUISINE



We are open for lunch & dinner
from Monday to Saturday.

Zafferano Ristorante

8633 Weston Road
Woodbridge, On L4L 9M4
(905) 264.2323

www.zafferano.ca

Sapore BY ZAFFERANO

FINE ITALIAN DINING AT ITS BEST



We are open for lunch & dinner
from Monday to Saturday.

Sapore by Zafferano

8000 Highway #27
Woodbridge, On L4H 0A8
(905) 851.3355

www.saporebyzafferano.ca

THE SACK RACE...

Being a Coach is hard work. Being a Coach in Serie A is even harder where the stakes are high and a couple of losses can lead to a sacking. Every year, bets are placed on who will be the first tactician to get the boot. As with any year, some candidates are better sack prospects than others. Who will be the first to go?

A betting man would be wise to take any Coach plying his trade at Palermo. Beppe Iachini is just one in an impressive list of men who have led the Rosanero under President Maurizio Zamparini's watch. Iachini is the favourite to win the sack race if for nothing other than this stat - only one Coach in Zamparini's tenure has lasted an entire season without being sacked, Francesco Guidolin in 2004.

Joining Iachini in the race are the Coaches from the other two promoted sides, Empoli's Maurizio Sarri and Cesena's Pierpaolo Bisoli. While they may have a longer leash than their Palermo counterpart, newly-promoted clubs are quick to pull the



trigger when things are going badly.

Sassuolo's Eusebio Di Francesco was sacked once already last season whereas Chievo's Eugenio Corini was at risk as well. The duo will face pressure to avoid a string of bad results if they want to stay on the bench.

Stefano Pioli is at the helm of the biggest club of his coaching career and expectations are very high. He was sacked last season while underwhelming at Bologna and the Biancocelesti may not wait all that long for him to come good in the capital.

Newly-appointed Pippo Inzaghi faces an incredibly daunting job at Milan. The ex-player must prove himself quickly for a Rossoneri side itching to return to prestigious levels. Should he underperform, the sackings of Max Allegri and Clarence Seedorf could be a foreshadowing of his future demise.



THE COACHES FOR THIS SEASON

Club	Coach	In Charge Since...	Tenure with Club	Last Season Finish
Atalanta	Stefano Colantuono	15/6/2010	5th Season	11th
Cagliari	Zdenek Zeman	2/7/2014	1st Season	15th
Cesena	Pierpaolo Bisoli	11/9/2012	3rd Season	4th in Serie B
Chievo	Eugenio Corini	12/11/2013	3rd Season	16th
Empoli	Maurizio Sarri	25/6/2012	3rd Season	2nd in Serie B
Fiorentina	Vincenzo Montella	11/6/2012	3rd Season	4th
Genoa	Gian Piero Gasperini	29/9/2013	2nd Season	14th
Inter	Walter Mazzarri	24/5/2013	2nd Season	5th
Juventus	Massimiliano Allegri	16/7/2014	1st Season	1st
Lazio	Stefano Pioli	12/6/2014	1st Season	9th
Milan	Pippo Inzaghi	9/6/2014	1st Season	8th
Napoli	Rafa Benitez	28/5/2013	2nd Season	3rd
Palermo	Beppe Iachini	25/9/2013	2nd Season	1st in Serie B
Parma	Roberto Donadoni	9/1/2012	3rd Season	6th
Roma	Rudi Garcia	13/6/2013	2nd Season	2nd
Sampdoria	Sinisa Mihajlovic	20/11/2013	2nd Season	12th
Sassuolo	Eusebio Di Francesco	3/3/2014	3rd Season	17th
Torino	Giampiero Ventura	6/6/2011	4th Season	7th
Udinese	Andrea Stramaccioni	4/6/2014	1st Season	13th
Verona	Andrea Mandorlini	9/11/2010	5th Season	10th



OTHER NOTABLES...





DON'T MISS OUT ON 2015 SEASON SEATS

PRIORITY ACCESS TO NEW SEAT LOCATIONS



THE NEW BMO FIELD AWAITS YOU

TORONTOFC.CA/WAITLIST

SERIE A CITIES

Turin, Milan, Verona, Genoa and Rome. Each city boasts two representatives in Serie A, but which pair will have the strongest season? Mark Siglioccolo assesses which dynamic duo will dominate



With a record breaking 102 points last season, Juventus beat the combined total of the two Veronese and brace of Genoa-based clubs autonomously. A repeat of such a staggering feat seems unlikely now that their mastermind, boss Antonio Conte, has moved on. However, their champions have remained and whilst Massimiliano Allegri may have his doubters, a new tactician may refocus them. With their attention perhaps focused elsewhere, however, their domestic crown may well be under threat. Toro's tally of 57 points last term was an improvement from the season prior thanks

"GENOA AND VERONA'S REPRESENTATIVES APPEAR TO BE THE MOST IMPROVED QUARTET, BUT A COMBINED EFFORT WILL NOT BE ENOUGH FOR EITHER CITY TO DOMINATE."

to surprise Capocannoniere **Ciro Immobile**. Now at Borussia Dortmund, the 24-year-old will be sorely missed. Torino are yet to replace him and although they have brought in **Fabio Quagliarella** from across the city, he is not an out-and-out striker and is unlikely to replicate the tally of 22 strikes by Immobile.

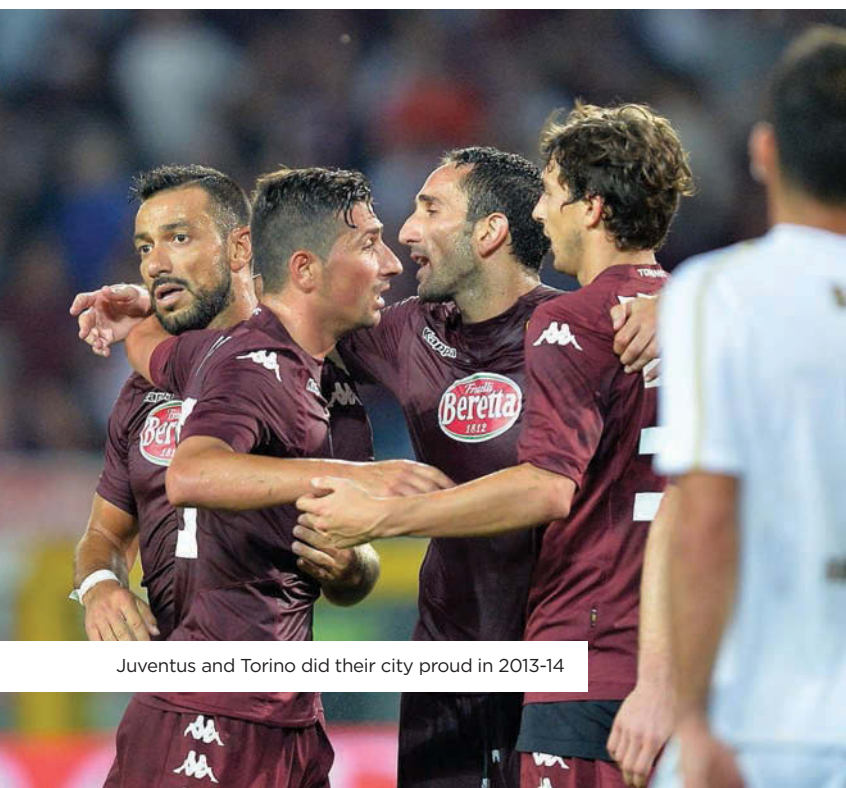
If the Turin twins will struggle to reach the dizzy heights of last season, the Genoa gene-pool can surely not fair any worse. Neither Sampdoria or Genoa managed a top 10 finish, but both kept looking over their shoulder as the threat of relegation

loomed large. Il Grifone have lost their top scorer from last term, with **Alberto Gilardino** replaced by **Mauricio Pinilla** and **Alessandro Matri** who boast 176 Serie A goals between them. Both have been plagued by inconsistency though and Sampdoria also appear to have a pair of strikers set to either be spectacular or anonymous. **Gonzalo Bergessio** joins from relegated Catania to join **Stefano Okaka**, whom has already enjoyed a decent pre-season.

The Milanese clubs also desperately under achieved last term. New Milan boss **Filippo Inzaghi** will look to exert his boyish exuberance on a side who simply can not perform any worse. **Mario Balotelli's** departure now leaves a big question mark over the club and unless they replace him adequately, it is difficult to see where goals will come from. Inter fared slightly better than their city rivals, at least qualifying for the Europa League. The addition of **Nemanja Vidic**, **Gary Medel** and **Danny Osvaldo** should assist a stronger push this season for a club still in transition.

Of the two Veronese outfits, it was Chievo who let the side down last term. **Luca Toni** rolled back the years to finish as runner up in the Capocannoniere charts and fire Verona to a mightily impressive 54 points and 10th place finish. Chievo were calamitous, but a string of new signings may have revamped their team enough to see them begin to establish some consistency. **Alessandro Gamberini** and **Cristiano Biraghi** are tasked with tightening up the rearguard along with new net-minder **Francesco Bardi**. Upfront the acquisition of Milan's **Valter Birsa** and Catania's **Maxi Lopez** should assist **Alberto Paloschi** in the goal scoring department.

Roma threatened to run away with the Scudetto by winning their opening 10 games last season. Despite remaining unbeaten for 17, the wheels inevitably came off and



Juventus and Torino did their city proud in 2013-14



they finished as runners-up by that number of points. A strong transfer market indicates another serious title threat although they will have to balance their assault with midweek Champions League ties. Reinforcements Ashley Cole and Davide Astori should strengthen the back line and Juan Iturbe has been bought to score goals. Lazio, meanwhile, have failed to finish in the top four in the past two campaigns. Stefan De Vrij should sure up the defence and further recruits Marco Parolo, Filip Djordjevic and Dusan Basta will consolidate their stars.

Genoa and Verona's representatives appear to be the most improved quartet, but a combined effort will not be enough for either city to dominate. Whilst the Turin pair seem diminished from last season they remain the front-runners with Juventus title favourites and Torino capable of another top six finish. Milan and Inter continue their rebuilding process and whilst they surely must improve from 2013-14, it could take a few more years to reassert their dominance. The serious threat comes from Rome with the Giallorossi looking strong and Lazio due a decent campaign following a couple of disappointing seasons. Juventus have dominated since 2012, but a Roman resurgence may be imminent. It could well be the capital's time to shine.

TURIN SET PACE

Turin clearly dominated last season with closest rivals Rome hardly threatening as they trailed by 18 points. The Eternal City did, however, finish well clear of Milan and in truth the Rossoneri and Nerazzurri were guilty of letting the industrial capital of Italy down. It was honours even between Turin and Milan in 2012-13 with both cities accruing 126 points apiece. Just one point separated Verona and Genoa in this hypothetical League table and it should prove to be similarly tight between them again this season. Although Turin and Verona only had one representative each in 2010-11, Milan ruled with a one-two finish and an impressive 158 points. Rome also performed well with 129 whilst Genoa were just three points shy of a century.



Club	Pts	Club	Pts	City	Pts
Juventus	102	Torino	57	Turin	159
Roma	85	Lazio	56	Rome	141
Milan	57	Inter	60	Milan	117
Verona	54	Chievo	36	Verona	90
Genoa	44	Sampdoria	45	Genoa	89

DERBY FEVER

Serie A dates for your diary...

Sun 30 Nov 2014

Juventus v Torino

Sun 26 Apr 2015

Torino v Juventus

Sun 23 Nov 2014

Milan v Inter

Sun 19 Apr 2015

Inter v Milan

Sun 11 Jan 2015

Roma v Lazio

Sun 24 May 2015

Lazio v Roma

Sun 28 Sep 2014

Genoa v Sampdoria

Sun 22 Feb 2015

Sampdoria v Genoa

Sun 21 Dec 2014

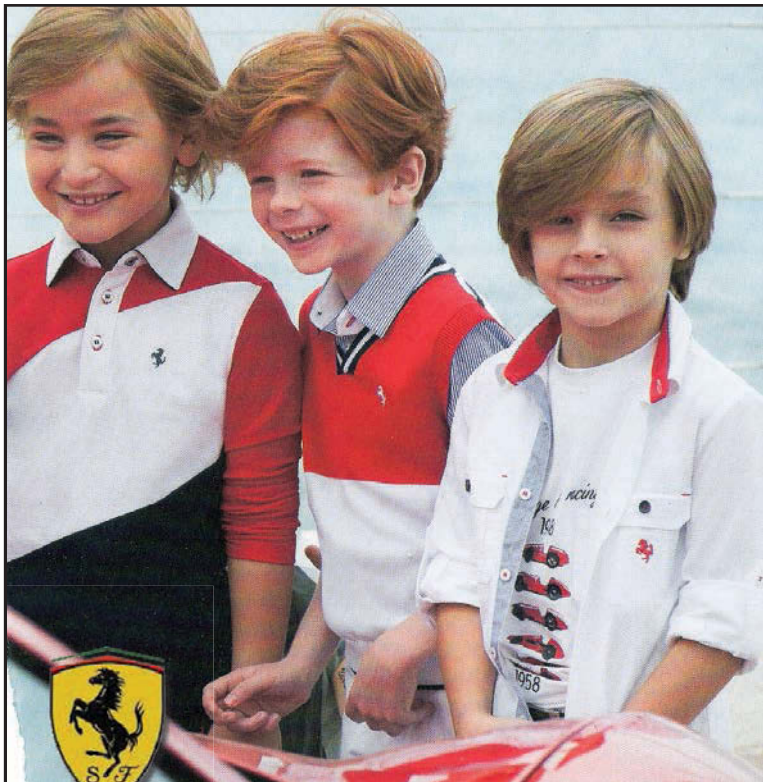
Verona v Chievo

Sun 10 May 2015

Chievo v Verona



Both Milan clubs will be looking for redemption in the new campaign



DESIGNER FASHIONS FOR KIDS... AT INCREDIBLE PRICES!

zero20kids

DESIGNER CLOTHING & SHOES ■ BABY ■ CHILDREN ■ TWEEN

905-851-6041 • www.zero20.com



SV Seven View

est. 1979



Serving the community for over 40 years

SALES • LEASING • SERVICE • BODY SHOP • PARTS

2685 Highway Seven West, Concord, Ontario L4K 1V8
Toll Free: 1 888 695 1601 • F: 905-669-3731 • www.sevenviewchrysler.com

THE TRANSFERS

The transfer window has finally slammed shut after another hectic summer. Jeremy Lim highlights the winners and losers from the latest calcio mercato session

BEST SIGNING

1 Juan Iturbe

Verona to Roma

Roma will be turning to Juan Iturbe, the symbol of their newfound might this season, to lend a big hand toppling Juventus. The effervescent winger convinced the Giallorossi to pick him up from under the noses of their title rivals following his breakthrough season at Verona, where he notched eight goals and five assists in 33 appearances. Direct, pacy and a goalscoring threat, Iturbe has the potential to become a massive weapon under the direction of Coach Rudi Garcia.



2 Alvaro Morata

Real Madrid to Juventus

Juventus may not have fallen too far short of making a marquee signing when they brought in Alvaro Morata this summer. A threat around the opponent's box and with a keen eye for goal, the prospect has already earned comparisons to Real Madrid great Raul. Now, Morata could become the focal point in the Old Lady's attack for many years to come.

3 Kostas Manolas

Olympiacos to Roma

Losing Mehdi Benatia had never been Roma's plan. The swiftness with which the capital club closed a deal for replacement Kostas Manolas was impressive, however. The 23-year-old rose to prominence during the World Cup in Brazil, where his tenacious displays helped the country to the round of 16. Roma will expect him to erect a new defensive barrier alongside Leandro Castan this term.

BEST LOAN SIGNING

1 Marko Marin

Chelsea to Fiorentina

Testimony for the quality of new Fiorentina-loanee Marko Marin arrived from the mouth of compatriot Mario Gomez. "He is fast with the ball and is deadly in one-on-one situations. Fiorentina have made a good choice," the striker said. Marin moves to the Artemio Franchi on the back of winning consecutive Europa Leagues, and will certainly inject more pace and quality to an already-potent Viola attack eagerly anticipating the start of the season.

2. Michu

Swansea to Napoli

At Napoli thanks to the Spanish connection, Michu teams up with Rafael Benitez after a pair of good seasons in the Premier League with Swansea. The 28-year-old's ability to play upfront or just behind a main striker boosts the Partenopei's options, although whether he is of sufficient quality to bring Napoli dreams of silverware into focus is still unknown.

3 Marco van Ginkel

Chelsea to Milan

After initial doubt, Milan eventually secured Marco van Ginkel on deadline day. Coach Filippo Inzaghi must first nurse the 21-year-old back to full fitness after he was sidelined for eight months last season with injury, but the club will be able to reap the benefits of the Dutchman's exciting box-to-box ability and finesse on the ball immediately after.



"ANOTHER GREAT TRANSFER WINDOW HAS COME TO A CLOSE. NOW WE'LL SEE WHICH SIGNING WILL STAND OUT THE MOST"

TOP POTENTIAL SIGNING

1 Kingsley Coman

Paris Saint-Germain to Juventus

While there was hope Kingsley Coman would be able to emulate Paul Pogba's impact after completing his free transfer to Juventus, few were prepared for the type of impact he made on his Serie A debut. The attacking midfielder terrorised Chievo's defence and was unlucky not to score. Despite it still being early days, the young Parisian - like Pogba - has quickly come to the attention of the rest of the League.



2 Stefan de Vrij

Feyenoord to Lazio

Stefan de Vrij arrives at Lazio one of the World Cup's breakout stars. The 22-year-old rejected comparisons to Jaap Stam though, and is just keen to go on blazing his own trail. His awareness, calm and composure at the back should more than put him on the right track to success in the Italian capital.

3 Giacomo Bonaventura

Atalanta to Milan

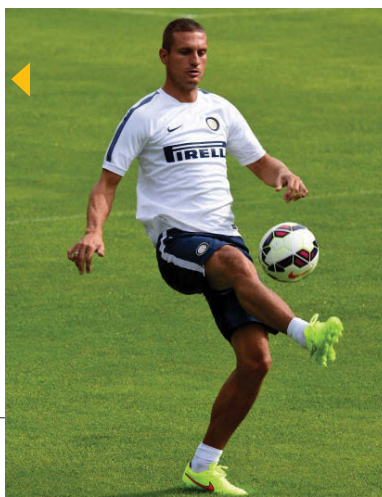
Finally presented the opportunity to appear for a top side, Giacomo Bonaventura cried tears of joy when sealing a deadline-day move to Milan. The industrious attacking midfielder is a product of the famed Atalanta youth academy, and has the right ingredients to step up his game and establish himself at San Siro.

BEST VALUE SIGNING

1 Nemanja Vidic

Manchester United to Inter

Inter begin the season shorn of the leadership of the last remnants of their Treble-winning squad. Ex-Manchester United captain and defensive stalwart Nemanja Vidic arrives to redress any deficiency. Someone compatriot and former Nerazzurri icon Dejan Stankovic had no hesitation in calling 'Braveheart', the tough, uncompromising centre-back should feel right at home leading by example at San Siro. Having already excelled in pre-season, Vidic can only become more valuable as Inter's season goes on.



2 Diego Lopez

Real Madrid to Milan

Diego Lopez won the battle to guard the posts against Iker Casillas at former side Real Madrid, but lost the one on club politics. The 32-year-old will pose no such inconvenience to Milan though, as the Rossoneri shore up their backline with one of Europe's best shot-stoppers. He made an immediate impact by saving a penalty on his Serie A debut.

3 Patrice Evra

Manchester United to Juventus

A fixture at Manchester United for over eight years, Patrice Evra's leadership and credentials at left-back established him as a firm fan favourite. Now arrived back in the country where he began his professional career, the evergreen veteran grants new club Juventus the ability to switch to a four-man defence as required - a big plus for the Bianconeri in Europe.

MOST RISKY SIGNING

1 Daniel Osvaldo Southampton to Inter

There were understandably sceptics as Dani Osvaldo joined Inter, his sixth club in only five years, this summer. Prolific one day then moody and troubled the next, the striker has failed to settle at many a side after enduring numerous run-ins with fans, Coaches and teammates. At 28, the Nerazzurri may not exactly be Osvaldo's last chance saloon, but it's nevertheless time for him to deliver on his massive talent.

2 Fernando Torres Chelsea to Milan

The anxiety of Milan fans, as they watch their club transition from one unpredictable entity in Mario Balotelli to an even greater uncertainty in Fernando Torres, is clear and present. Torres' paltry scoring record and general profligacy at Chelsea certainly doesn't inspire much confidence, and his arrival to lead Filippo Inzaghi's attack is, at best, questionable.

Brought in to fill the goalscoring void left by Mario Balotelli, not everyone is convinced that Fernando Torres will be up to the task



3 Jeremy Menez Paris Saint-Germain to Milan

Three years have passed since Jeremy Menez last set foot in Italian football, and Milan will hope that his stint at Paris Saint-Germain has seen the occasionally-brilliant, yet massively frustrating, winger mature. On his day, the 27-year-old is capable of shredding rival defences with his pace and flair. When it's not though, he cuts a sulking figure on the periphery of action.

MOST UNDERRATED SIGNING

1 Gary Medel Cardiff to Inter

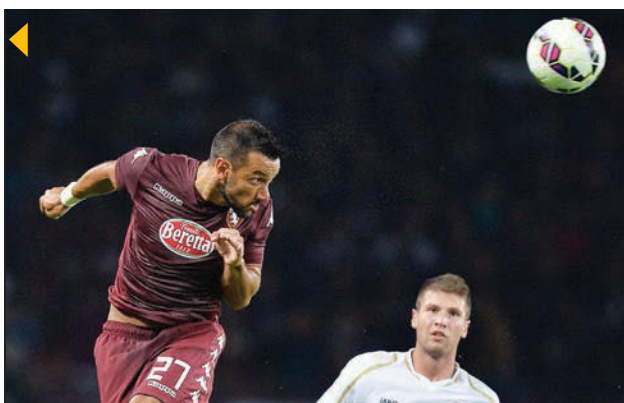
Inter faced a fight to get their man from Cardiff this summer. But Gary Medel is all about a fight. 'El Pitbull' showcases maximum commitment to wearing down his opponents on the field. The Chilean's battling qualities mean he never accepts defeat, as was evidenced when he insisted on representing his country against Brazil at the World Cup despite carrying an injury. The Nerazzurri badly need a player of his mettle, not to mention his technical capabilities - Medel is an excellent passer - in the campaign ahead.

2 Alex Paris Saint-Germain to Milan

That Alex arrived at Milan on a free transfer probably led to the wrong associations being formed amongst the Rossoneri faithful. Yet the stopper - aptly nicknamed 'The Tank' for his robust style of defending - is no dud. Having lately formed the backbone of Paris Saint-Germain's backline in their latest Ligue 1 triumphs, Alex will beef up a previously-frail Milan side considerably.

3 Fabio Quagliarella Juventus to Torino

Replacing a Capocannoniere with a player cast to one side in his final months at Juventus is rarely an attractive proposition. For Fabio Quagliarella and Torino though, it is a different case. The recently-recalled Italy international did not light up the headlines crossing the city-divide to take over the goalscoring burden left by Ciriaco De Simone, but that could change the moment he starts banging them in for the Granata.



Bakery + Cafe
SanRemo inc

Proudly serving since 1969

Italian tradition



374 Royal York Road

Toronto Ontario M8Y 2R3

www.sanremobakery.com

416 255-2808 or 416 255 2718

BEST SALE

1 Robinho

Milan to Santos

Milan's plans to weed out the deadwood came to fruition this summer. Being able to finally cut Robinho - even if only on loan for a season at Santos - from the squad and the club's wage bill counts as a major step forwards in Coach Fillipo Inzaghi's plans to rejuvenate his side.

2 Kaka

Milan to Orlando City

Kaka's second stint with his beloved Rossoneri wasn't bad per se, as he mustered seven goals in 30 appearances after four injury-hit years at Real Madrid. But at 32, releasing the San Siro icon was the best choice as young stars like Giacomo Bonaventura and Riccardo Saponara prepare to take centre-stage.



3 Goran Pandev

Napoli to Galatasaray

One year of being on the fringes of the Napoli squad has resulted in Goran Pandev packing his bags for Turkey. Not many will miss the Macedonian who was increasingly becoming a disruptive influence with every passing match he was left on the bench. His favourite memory will be of playing a major role in the 2012 Coppa Italia Final victory over Juventus, but there won't be many others.

MOST REGRETTABLE SALE

1 Mehdi Benatia

Roma to Bayern Munich

Roma's summer in the transfer market was one of unrivalled success - until one considers the sale of key player Mehdi Benatia to Bayern Munich. The centre-back departed following a wage dispute which could leave the Scudetto contenders counting the actual cost of losing their defensive lynchpin. Benatia's absolute assurance and authority at the back will be sorely missed now, as the Giallorossi's backline falls under scrutiny without the Moroccan.

2 Alessio Cerci

Torino to Atletico Madrid

The loss of Serie A's top scorer was something Torino aimed to offset with the signings of Fabio Quagliarella and Amauri. But the high-reaching Granata could scarcely have afforded to lose their chief creative force in Alessio Cerci. The late timing of his sale meant the club were unable to secure a replacement, and could now find themselves short of options going forward.

3 Mario Balotelli

Milan to Liverpool

A little over 19 months was how long it took for Mario Balotelli to realise the shirt of Milan, the club he supported as a boy, wasn't a good fit. On one hand, Rossoneri fans won't miss the enigmatic striker's antics or the way he constantly polarised opinion about him. But somewhere inside, they also know there's the distinct possibility they prematurely waving goodbye to a player who can still turn out to be a great.



BEST TRANSFER CAMPAIGN

1 Roma

If Roma had first indicated how serious they were in their bid for silverware last term, they've only gone and confirmed it this summer through their transfer activity. The addition of high-quality youngsters and experienced campaigners to Rudi Garcia's disposal make them most improved this season, even as they wave goodbye to Mehdi Benatia. With depth in every area of the squad, the ambitious Giallorossi are prepared to mount their challenge on all fronts now.

2 Juventus

Italian champions Juventus may not have added a household name to their ranks, but their ability to retain the services of Arturo Vidal and Paul Pogba, plus the addition of signings that bring the ability to alter their tactical shape on the field, puts them right up there with the best markets in Italy.

3 Milan

Edging out city rivals Inter as well as Lazio and Sassuolo are Milan, who achieved a number of transfer objectives this summer. Efforts taken to strengthen the spine of the team have provided new boss Filippo Inzaghi with a competitive line-up, helping to provide a distraction from the sale of Mario Balotelli. With Brazilian duo Robinho and Kaka out of the club too, it could be a new beginning for the Rossoneri.

WORST TRANSFER CAMPAIGN

1 Napoli

Clinching the Coppa Italia last season was supposed to represent a new dawn for Rafael Benitez's reign at Napoli. Instead, they've sputtered with their dealings on the transfer front, especially compared to the frenzied activity of their previous summer. Key players from last term such as Pepe Reina and Federico Fernandez have left the outfit, and though their ambitions remain intact, question marks linger whether the Partenopei have done enough to make the necessary leap forward in quality.

2 Parma

After an impressive upward climb last term, it seems Parma's aspirations have been allowed to fizzle out. Expulsion from taking part in this season's Europa League owing to unpaid taxes appears to have taken a rolling effect, as Marco Parolo and Amauri have been allowed to leave the Stadio Tardini - for direct mid-table rivals no less - and improperly replaced.

3 Cagliari

Great anticipation seems to follow Zdenek Zeman wherever he goes, but the only thing Cagliari fans should most expect is a slaughter, after a host of experienced players filed through the exit door in 2014. Zeman has drafted a raft of young talent - not least of all promising Inter striker Samuele Longo on loan - as is typical of the Czech, though whether they are enough to keep the Sardinians out of the relegation zone is unknown.



MAJOR SUMMER MOVES

Club	In	Out
Atalanta	Zappacosta (D, Avellino) Biava (D, Lazio) Boakye (A, Juventus) Bianchi (A, Bologna)	Consigli (GK, Sassuolo) Yepes (D, out of contract) Bonaventura (M, Milan) Livaja (A, Rubin Kazan)
Cagliari	Capuano (D, Pescara) Crisetig (M, Inter) Longo (A, Inter)	Astori (D, Roma) Vecino (M, Empoli) Pinilla (A, Genoa)
Cesena	Leali (GK, Spezia) Magnusson (D, Juventus) Brienza (A, Atalanta)	Camporese (D, Bari) Alhassan (M, Genoa) D'Alessandro (A, Atalanta)
Chievo	Bardi (GK, Inter) Gamberini (D, Genoa) Schelotto (M, Inter) Maxi Lopez (A, Catania)	Agazzi (GK, Milan) Drame (D, Atalanta) Guarente (M, Empoli) Parades (A, Roma)
Empoli	Guarante (M, Chievo) Laxalt (M, Inter) Vecino (M, Fiorentina) Zielinski (M, Udinese)	Bachini (D, Lucchese) Eramo (M, Sampdoria) Gargiulo (M, Tuttocuoio) Castile (M, Pro Vercelli)
Fiorentina	Richards (D, Manchester City) Basanta (D, Monterrey) Marin (M, Chelsea) Bernardeschi (A, Crotone) Babacar (A, Modena)	Diakite (D, Sunderland) Roncaglia (D, Genoa) Ambrosini (M, retired) Anderson (M, MAN U) Matri (A, Milan)
Genoa	Roncaglia (D, Fiorentina) Perotti (M, Sevilla) Pinilla (A, Genoa)	Gamberini (D, Chievo) Vrsaljko (D, Sassuolo) Gilardino (A, Guangzhou EVGR)
Inter	Vidic (D, Manchester United) Dodo (D, Roma) M'Vila (M, Rubin Kazan) Medel (M, Cardiff) Osvaldo (A, Southampton)	Zanetti (D, retired) Samuel (D, Basel) Cambiasso (M, Leicester) Taider (M, Sassuolo) Milito (A, Racing Avellaneda)

Club	In	Out
Juventus	Evra (D, Manchester United) Romulo (M, Verona) Pereyra (M, Udinese) Coman (A, Paris Saint-Germain) Morata (A, Real Madrid)	Peluso (D, Sassuolo) Isla (M, Queens Park Rangers) Osvaldo (A, Southampton) Vucinic (A, Al-Jazira) Quagliarella (A, Torino)
Lazio	De Vrij (D, Feyenoord) Braafheid (D, Hoffenheim) Basta (M, Udinese) Parolo (M, Parma) Djordjevic (A, Nantes)	Dias (D, out of contract) Biava (D, Atalanta) Minala (M, Bari) Elez (M, Grosseto) Helder Postiga (A, Valencia)
Milan	Diego Lopez (GK, Real Madrid) Alex (D, Paris Saint-Germain) Van Ginkel (M, Chelsea) Menez (A, Paris Saint-Germain) Torres (A, Chelsea)	Constant (D, Trabzonspor) Cristante (M, Benfica) Kaka (M, Orlando City) Robinho (A, Santos) Balotelli (A, Liverpool)
Napoli	Andujar (GK, Catania) Koulibaly (D, Genk) David Lopez (M, Espanyol) De Guzman (M, Villarreal) Michu (A, Swansea)	Reina (GK, Liverpool) Fernandez (D, Swansea) Dzemal (M, Galatasaray) Behrami (M, Hamburg) Pandev (A, Galatasaray)
Palermo	Emerson (D, Santos) Gonzalez (D, Columbus Crew) Makienok (A, Brondby)	Verre (C, Udinese) Lafferty (A, Norwich) Hernandez (A, Hull City)
Parma	De Ceglie (D, Juventus) Lodi (M, Catania) Belfodil (A, Inter)	Cassani (D, Fiorentina) Parolo (M, Lazio) Amauri (A, Torino)
Roma	Manolas (D, Olympiacos) Cole (D, Chelsea) Astori (D, Cagliari) Keita (M, Valencia) Iturbe (A, Verona)	Benatia (D, Bayern Munich) Dodo (D, Inter) Romagnoli (D, Sampdoria) Taddei (M, Perugia) Bastos (M, Al Ain)
Sampdoria	Silvestre (D, Inter) Romagnoli (D, Roma) Bergessio (A, Catania)	Mustafi (D, Valencia) Salamon (D, Pescara) Maxi Lopez (A, Catania)
Sassuolo	Consigli (GK, Atalanta) Vrsaljko (D, Genoa) Peluso (D, Juventus)	Marrone (M, Juventus) Kurtic (M, Fiorentina) Sanabria (A, Roma)
Torino	Nocerino (M, Milan) Amauri (A, Parma) Quagliarella (A, Juventus)	Tachtsidis (M, Genoa) Immobile (A, Borussia Dortmund) Cerci (A, Atletico Madrid)
Udinese	Faraoni (D, Watford) Riera (M, Watford) Thereau (A, Chievo)	Basta (M, Lazio) Pereyra (M, Juventus) Zielinski (M, Empoli)
Verona	Marquez (D, Leon) Tachtsidis (M, Genoa) Saviola (A, Olympiacos)	Albertazzi (D, Milan) Romulo (M, Juventus) Iturbe (A, Roma)



Roma was already a strong contender last year. With their new transfers and acquisitions, they only seem stronger.

CATALDI
fresh market

Live Laugh Love Eat
SINCE 1979

////////////////////////////////////

**GROCERIES,
FRESH PRODUCE,
IN-HOUSE BUTCHER,
FRESH BREADS,
PATRIES & CAKES,
HOT TABLE,
SPECIAL EVENT
CATERING,
GARDEN CENTRE
AND MORE..**

////////////////////////////////////

*Bring the taste of
Italy right to your
home.*

CATALDI FRESH MARKET INC.

140 WOODBRIDGE AVENUE
IN THE MARKET LANE SHOPPING CENTRE
905.605.5565
WWW.CATALDI.CA

STATS ZONE

The facts and figures when it comes to the history of the Italian top flight...

NUMBER OF TIMES RELEGATED TO SERIE B

- 12 Brescia
- 11 Atalanta, Bari
- 8 Genoa, Lecce, Palermo
- 7 Livorno, Verona
- 6 Modena, Napoli, Torino, Venezia



MOST CONSECUTIVE WINS

- 17 Inter (2006-07)
- 12 Juventus (2013-14)
- 11 Roma (2005-06 & 2012-13 to 2013-14)
- 10 Juventus (1931-32)
- 10 Milan (1950-51 & 1989-90)
- 10 Bologna (1963-64)



MOST HOME WINS IN A SEASON

- 19/19 Juventus (2013-14)

LONGEST HOME UNBEATEN STREAK

- 88 Torino (January 1943-November 1949)

LONGEST AWAY UNBEATEN STREAK

- 38 Milan (September 1991-October 1993)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEAMS IN SERIE A

- Serie A 1929-30 until 1933-34: 18 teams
- Serie A 1934-35 until 1942-43: 16 teams
- Serie A 1946-47: 20 teams
- Serie A 1947-48: 21 teams
- Serie A 1948-49 until 1951-52: 20 teams
- Serie A 1952-53 until 1966-67: 18 teams
- Serie A 1967-68 until 1987-88: 16 teams
- Serie A 1988-89 until 2003-04: 18 teams
- Serie A 2004-05: 20 teams

NUMBER OF TOP FLIGHT SEASONS

- 83 Inter
- 82 Juventus, Roma
- 81 Milan
- 77 Fiorentina
- 72 Lazio
- 71 Torino
- 69 Napoli
- 68 Bologna
- 58 Sampdoria



NUMBER OF CONSECUTIVE HOME WINS

- 21 Torino
(November 1947-
November 1948)

NUMBER OF CONSECUTIVE AWAY WINS

- 11 Inter
(October 2006-
April 2007)



NUMBER OF CONSECUTIVE WINS FROM START OF SEASON

- 10 Roma (2013-14)



STATS ZONE



NUMBER OF CHAMPIONSHIPS WON

30 Juventus
18 Milan, Inter
9 Genoa
7 Torino, Bologna, Pro Vercelli
3 Roma
2 Fiorentina, Lazio, Napoli
1 Cagliari, Casale, Novese, Sampdoria, Verona

CONSECUTIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS WON

5 Juventus (1930-31, 1931-32, 1932-33, 1933-34, 1934-35)
5 Torino (1942-43, 1945-46, 1946-47, 1947-48, 1948-49)
5 Inter (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10)
3 Genoa (1898, 1899, 1900)
3 Genoa (1902, 1903, 1904)
3 Pro Vercelli (1910-11, 1911-12, 1912-13)
3 Milan (1991-92, 1992-93, 1993-94)
3 Juventus (2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14)



NUMBER OF TIMES CROWNED WINTER CHAMPIONS

27 Juventus	3 Torino
17 Inter	2 Cagliari
17 Milan	2 Lazio
6 Roma	1 Livorno
5 Bologna	1 Liguria
5 Fiorentina	1 Verona
3 Napoli	

The side leading the table at the halfway stage of the season...



LONGEST UNBEATEN STREAKS

58 Milan (May 1991-March 1993)
49 Juventus (May 2011-November 2012)

LONGEST UNBEATEN STREAKS IN A SEASON

38/38 Juventus (2011-12)
34/34 Milan (1991-92)
30/30 Perugia (1978-79)



MOST POINTS IN A SEASON

Points average calculated on current system...

51 Juventus 2.46 per game in 1976-77 (16 side Serie A, two points for a win)
58 Inter 2.47 per game in 1988-89 (18 side Serie A, two points for a win)
82 Milan 2.41 per game in 2003-04 (18 side Serie A, three points for a win)
63 Torino 2.39 per game in 1946-47 (20 side Serie A, two points for a win)
102 Juventus 2.68 per game in 2013-14 (20 side Serie A, three points for a win)
65 Torino 2.35 per game in 1947-48 (21 side Serie A, two points for a win)

TOP 10 GOALSCORERS

Silvio Piola	274 (1929-54)
Francesco Totti	235 (1992-)
Gunnar Nordahl	225 (1948-58)
Giuseppe Meazza	216 (1929-47)
Jose Altafini	216 (1958-76)
Roberto Baggio	205 (1985-04)
Antonio Di Natale	193 (2002-)
Kurt Hamrin	190 (1956-71)
Giuseppe Signori	188 (1991-04)
Alessandro Del Piero	188 (1993-12)



TOP 10 APPEARANCES

Paolo Maldini	647 (1984-09)
Javier Zanetti	615 (1995-14)
Gianluca Pagliuca	592 (1987-07)
Dino Zoff	570 (1961-83)
Pietro Vierchowod	562 (1980-00)
Francesco Totti	561 (1992-)
Roberto Mancini	541 (1981-00)
Silvio Piola	537 (1929-54)
Enrico Albertosi	532 (1958-80)
Gianni Rivera	527 (1958-79)

OLDEST PLAYERS

Marco Ballotta	44 years, 38 days
Francesco Antonioli	42 years, 235 days
Alberto Fontana	41 years, 297 days

YOUNGEST PLAYERS

Amedeo Amadei	15 years, 280 days
Gianni Rivera	15 years, 288 days
Aristide Rossi	15 years, 294 days



STATS ZONE

YOUNGEST SCORERS

Amedeo Amadei	15 years 9 months 14 days
Gianni Rivera	16 years 2 months 7 days
Gino Colaussi	16 years 7 months 29 days
Renato Buso	16 years 10 months 0 days
Roberto Mancini	16 years 10 months 7 days
Khouma el Babacar	17 years 0 months 3 days



MOST COACHING APPEARANCES

795	Carlo Mazzone
787	Nereo Rocco
689	Giovanni Trapattoni
647	Nils Liedholm
639	Giuseppe Viani
561	Fulvio Bernardini
555	Francesco Guidolin
505	Luigi Ferrero
503	Luigi Radice
490	Eugenio Bersellini



SCUDETTO WINNING COACHES

7	Giovanni Trapattoni
5	Fabio Capello
5	Marcello Lippi
4	Carlo Carcano
4	Hermann Felsner
3	William Garbutt
3	Árpád Weisz
3	Helenio Herrera
3	Roberto Mancini
3	Antonio Conte



MOST RED CARDS

16	Paolo Montero
12	Luigi Di Biagio
12	Giulio Falcone
12	Giampiero Pinzi
11	Massimo Ambrosini
11	Giuseppe Bergomi
11	Fernando Couto
11	Giorgio Ferrini
11	Sulley Muntari
11	Francesco Totti



MOST CHAMPIONSHIPS WON

8	Virginio Rosetta (2 Pro Vercelli 6 Juventus)
8	Giovanni Ferrari (5 Juventus 2 Inter 1 Bologna)
8	Giuseppe Furino (Juventus)
7	Roberto Bettega (Juventus)
7	Alessandro Costacurta (Milan)
7	Ciro Ferrara (2 Napoli 5 Juventus)
7	Paolo Maldini (Milan)
7	Gaetano Scirea (Juventus)
7	Guglielmo Gabetto (2 Juventus 5 Torino)



UNBEATABLE GOALKEEPERS

Sebastiano Rossi	Milan	1993-94	929 minutes
Dino Zoff	Juventus	1972-73	903 minutes
Mario Da Pozzo	Genoa	1963-64	791 minutes
Ivan Pelizzoli	Roma	2003-04	774 minutes
Davide Pinato	Atalanta	1997-98	757 minutes
Gianluigi Buffon	Juventus	2013-14	744 minutes
Luca Marchegiani	Lazio	1997-98	744 minutes
Morgan De Sanctis	Roma	2013-14	744 minutes
Adriano Reginato	Cagliari	1966-67	712 minutes
Sebastiano Rossi	Milan	1993-94	690 minutes

MOST GOALS IN A GAME

Acqui	0-16	Genoa (1914-15)
Inter	16-0	Vicenza (1914-15)

MOST GOALS BY ONE PLAYER IN A GAME

6	Silvio Piola (Pro Vercelli 7-2 Fiorentina, 1933-34)
6	Omar Sivori (Juventus 9-1 Inter, 1960-61)



HIGHEST SCORING DRAW

Torino	5-5	Ambrosiana (1940-41)
--------	-----	----------------------

CANADA'S LARGEST SOCCER STORE



SHOP ONLINE WITH SOCCERX.COM

buy ac milan, inter milan, ac roma, juventus & italian national team merchandize and more at soccerx.com

SAVE TODAY! USE PROMO CODE: soccer36-5M6J to SAVE 20% on regularly priced items

Valid September 4th, 2014 - November 30th, 2014



SOCCERX.COM

CANADA'S LARGEST SOCCER STORE

Contact us at 1-866-942-6605 or at info@soccerx.com. Outfitting Players, Clubs & Teams for over 26 years.

SERIE A IN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Round of 16, first leg
Round of 16, second leg
Quarter-finals, first leg
Quarter-finals, second leg
Semi-finals, first leg
Semi-finals, second leg
Final (Olympiastadion, Berlin)

17-18/02/15 or 24-25/02/15
10-11/03/15 or 17-18/03/15
14-15/04/15
21-22/04/15
05-06/05/15
12-13/05/15
06/06/15



Juventus and Roma try to become the Champions of Europe, although a very long road awaits.

The Champions League draw was not kind to Roma, who returned to the competition after four years and were immediately placed into the Group of Death with Bundesliga winners Bayern Munich, Premier League victors Manchester City and CSKA Moscow. It's a particularly special encounter with Bayern, as Mehdi Benatia only completed his transfer for €26m plus €4m in add-ons the day before the draw.

"It's a good draw, I like it, we'll be outsiders," beamed Rudi Garcia. "Everyone assumes Roma are out, but we'll try to cause an upset." Gervinho added fixtures like this were "why we are in the Champions League," while Roberto Mancini assured the Giallorossi "are not inferior to Manchester City and can also get a result with Bayern."

Juventus were second seeds in the draw and were paired with last season's beaten finalists Atletico Madrid, Olympiacos and Malmö. Director general Beppe Marotta confessed "this is a group Juventus are happy with, but there are also hidden dangers like Malmö who have already started their season. The squad paid for a lack of experience in recent years, but qualification is within our grasp and we learned from what happened last season."

Mario Balotelli's Liverpool will face Carlo Ancelotti's trophy holders Real Madrid, Basel and Bulgarian newcomers Ludogorets, while Ciro Immobile at Borussia Dortmund takes on Arsenal, Anderlecht and Cesare Prandelli-coached Galatasaray. The Azzurri contingent at Paris Saint-Germain will fight it out with Barcelona, Ajax and Cypriots APOEL.



GROUP A

Atletico Madrid
Juventus
Olympiacos
Malmö

GROUP B

Real Madrid
FC Basel 1893
Liverpool
PFC Ludogorets

GROUP C

Benfica
Zenit
Bayer Leverkusen
Monaco

GROUP D

Arsenal
Borussia Dortmund
Galatasaray
Anderlecht

GROUP E

Bayern Munich
Man. City
CSKA Moscow
Roma

GROUP F

Barcelona
PSG
Ajax
Apoel Nicosia

GROUP G

Chelsea
Schalke 04
Sporting Lisbon
NK Maribor

GROUP H

Porto
Shakhtar Donetsk
Athletic Bilbao
BATE Borisov



GROUP FIXTURES:

16 September 2014	2:45pm	@	Malmö
01 October 2014	2:45pm	vs.	Atletico Madrid
22 October 2014	2:45pm	vs.	Olympiacos
04 November 2014	2:45pm	@	Olympiacos
26 November 2014	2:45pm	vs.	Malmö
09 December 2014	2:45pm	@	Atletico Madrid



GROUP FIXTURES:

17 September 2014	2:45pm	@	CSKA Moscow
30 September 2014	2:45pm	vs.	Man. City
21 October 2014	2:45pm	@	Bayern Munich
05 November 2014	2:45pm	vs.	Bayern Munich
25 November 2014	2:45pm	vs.	CSKA Moscow
10 December 2014	2:45pm	@	Man. City





ITALIANS AIM FOR EUROPA GLORY

There are four Italian teams in the Europa League group phase, as Napoli lost their Champions League play-off with Athletic Bilbao, falling 4-2 on aggregate. Rafa Benitez's men will instead face Sparta Prague, Swiss side Young Boys and Slovan Bratislava and try to forget that Bilbao cost them €20m in revenue. Fiorentina have an interesting mix in Group K with Greeks PAOK, French team Guingamp and Belarusians Dinamo Minsk. Inter are in Group F with Dnipro, St Etienne and Qarabag of Azerbaijan after a 9-0 aggregate mauling of Stjarnan in the preliminary round. Torino squeezed past RNK Split to reach Group B, where they have a tough task and two Scandinavian trips against FC Copenhagen, Club Brugge and Helsinki.

GROUP A

Villarreal,
Borussia Mon.
FC Zurich
Apollon

GROUP B

FC Copenhagen
Club Brugge
Torino
Helsinki

GROUP C

Tottenham
Besiktas
FK Partizan
Asteras

GROUP D

FC Salzburg
Celtic
Dinamo Zagreb
Astra

GROUP E

PSV
Panathinaikos
Estoril
Dynamo Moscow

GROUP F

Inter
FC Dnipro
St Etienne
Qarabag

GROUP G

Sevilla
Standard Liege
Feyenoord
Rijeka

GROUP H

Lille
Wolfsburg
Everton
Krasnodar

GROUP I

Napoli
Sparta Prague
Young Boys
Slovan Bratislava

GROUP J

Dynamo Kiev
Steaua Bucharest
Rio Ave
Aab

GROUP K

Fiorentina
PAOK
Guingamp
Dinamo Minsk

GROUP L

Metalist
Trabzonspor
Legia
Lokeren



GROUP STAGE MATCH DAY 1: SEPTEMBER 18
GROUP STAGE MATCH DAY 2: OCTOBER 2
GROUP STAGE MATCH DAY 3: OCTOBER 23
GROUP STAGE MATCH DAY 4: NOVEMBER 6
GROUP STAGE MATCH DAY 5: NOVEMBER 27
GROUP STAGE MATCH DAY 6: DECEMBER 11

ROUND OF 32: FEBRUARY 19, 26

ROUND OF 16: MARCH 12, 19

QUARTERFINALS: APRIL 16, 23

SEMI-FINALS: MAY 7, 14

FINALS: MAY 27

PINE VIEW   **HYUNDAI**



A sedan this breathtaking deserves the world's first cabin CO₂ sensor.



Introducing the strikingly beautiful, all-new 2015 Genesis. It comes with an available, breakthrough CO₂ sensor; the first sensor in the world specifically designed to sense carbon dioxide levels in the cabin. Breathing in a confined space leads to CO₂ build up and increased drowsiness. This sensor automatically activates the ventilation system to add fresh air into the cabin. The result is increased driver alertness. This isn't just a breath of fresh air, but proof of the advanced innovation that has gone into delivering a motoring experience that embodies performance, technology and craftsmanship in perfect balance.



THE ALL-NEW 2015 GENESIS WITH STANDARD HTRAC ALL-WHEEL DRIVE.

	Weston Rd.	HWY 400
	HWY 7	
	Steeles	

PINE VIEW   **HYUNDAI**

905.851.2851

3790 HIGHWAY 7

AT WESTON RD

PINEVIEWHYUNDAI.CA



SERVING VAUGHAN FOR OVER 40 YEARS

AROUND the PENINSULA

HAIR-RAISING

Asked about Napoli's interest in Manchester United's Marouane Fellaini, President Aurelio De Laurentiis opted to stay away from tactical talk. "I really like his hair," smiled the movie mogul.



COUNTING THE COST

The accountants at Juventus and Roma had a smile on their faces after Napoli's failure to reach the Champions League group stages. It means that the €20m market pool funds provisionally set aside for the Azzurri will be passed on to the other two Italian clubs – €11m and €9m in Juve's favour.

ICE CREAM DIET

What would Roma's Francesco Totti sacrifice for the Scudetto?
"It depends. Maybe ice cream, for a year..."



BUTTER FINGERS TOTTI

Don't trust Francesco Totti in goal. Handed a glass award before a pre-season friendly, the Roma captain cracked it after dropping it on the floor.

ZEMAN A JUVE FAN!

Cagliari's new Coach Zdenek Zeman – known for his outspoken views on Juventus – has revealed he actually quite likes the Turin giants! "I have never had a problem with Juventus as a club. I was angry with certain people within their structure. I was born a Juventus fan and slept with their jersey at night..."

"MASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI FEELS PROFOUNDLY CONNECTED TO JUVENTUS AND CONFESSED TO ME HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BIANCONERI FAN!"

John Elkann reveals being a Juve fan is a phase everyone goes through, like puberty or watching WWE



"For the World Class Player"



**We Carry a Wide
Selection of Serie A
& English Premiership
Paraphernalia**



565 Seaman Street. Stoney Creek 905-643-4224
523 Upper Sherman Ave. Hamilton 905-318-4222
4130 Fairview St. Burlington 905-639-9866



BRONCOS INSPIRE PJANIC GEM

Miralem Pjanic clearly learned more than expected from a visit to the Denver Broncos training ground. He was filmed scoring a 50-yard field goal with the American football team, then 24 hours later netted from 60 yards in Roma's 3-2 friendly defeat to Manchester United. "I was inspired," said the Bosnian after finding the net from inside his own half.



TOP GUN

Atalanta President Antonio Percassi found a novel way of greeting fans at an event ahead of the upcoming season. The fashion mogul flew into Bergamo straddling a MiG fighter jet adorned with '1907' on the side – the year of the club's founding.

"PERHAPS IT IS NOT EASY TO NOTICE, IF YOU DO NOT WORK WITH HIM EVERY DAY, BUT JUAN MANUEL ITURBE IS A FORMULA 1 CAR."

Does Andrea Mandorlini mean he goes round in circles, never overtakes anyone and has a tendency to break down?

RAMI THE GLADIATOR

Milan defender Adil Rami looked to his favourite movie for inspiration, although might've misremembered the finale somewhat. "I felt like Gladiator! Like Maximus, I went through a difficult moment and at the end I won."



"I REALLY WISH THAT THE GROUP HAD THE FACE FOR BATTLE THAT WALTER MAZZARRI HAS."

Inter President Erick Thohir suggests his Coach audition for Game of Thrones

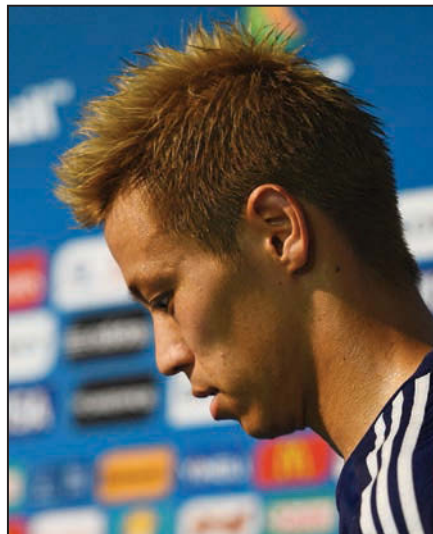
RAMI THE CHICKEN

Adil Rami was left out of Milan's pre-season friendly at the Mestalla after threats from Valencia fans. The defender demanded a permanent transfer away from the Spanish outfit after a six-month loan spell and his determination to leave did not sit well with some of his old supporters.



IDEAS MAN

Gianluigi Buffon seems to be a fan of new Juventus boss Massimiliano Allegri. "He brings forward ideas that are very innovative." Yes Gigi, he allowed Andrea Pirlo to leave Milan. Genius...



HONDA STALLS ON CORNER

Summer friendly games are often forgettable which is good news for Milan's Keisuke Honda. The Japanese international delivered a couple of comical corners against Valencia, with one being called the worst of all time across social media. Ouch.



MATRIX V ZZ AGAIN...

Marco Materazzi's ALS Ice Bucket Challenge brought back memories of the 2006 World Cup Final. The former defender wore a Zinedine Zidane Juventus jersey before revealing an Inter shirt with his own name on underneath. The water was then poured from the Champions League trophy. Matrix then nominated Zidane for the challenge...

TOTERA

FINE FOODS

IT'S ALL ABOUT GOOD TASTE



It's All About Good Taste!



MEAT



CHEESE



DELI

Our fine selection of prepared dishes includes:

- Lamb • Cordon Bleu • Stuffed Whole Chicken • Stuffed Veal Chop
- French Veal Chop • Stuffed Veal Roast • Stuffed Pork Tenderloin
- Turkey Breast • Grilled Vegetables • and More

Ask us about our catering services & let us help make your event memorable.

TOTERA

FINE FOODS

MEAT • CHEESE • DELI

Hours: • Mon 9-6 • Tues-Wed 9-7 • Thurs-Fri 9-8 • Sat 8-6 • Sunday 9-2

2414 Major Mackenzie Drive, Maple • 905-879-8325



Molana Optical

7-5283 Rutherford Rd. (LONGO'S PLAZA)
905.264.8835 • www.molanaoptical.com

VERSACE Dior *Mani Gine* YVES SAINT LAURENT GUCCI FreshLook
MOSCHINO BOSS DIESEL OAKLEY adidas Silhouette
ARMANI BCBGM AXAZRIA BURBERRY
BVLGARI PRADA Salvatore Ferragamo

"SAME DAY SERVICE" • FREE Repairs and Adjustments

Eye Exams on Site



CASSANO SAYS...

Every time he finds himself at a dream club and manages to atone for the earlier mistakes in his career, Antonio Cassano just manages to undo all his hard work again. In July, the enigmatic striker stated: "Happiness is Parma. Here I am divinely happy. I will stay here – unless I screw up." Surely it is just a matter of time...

STAM COLLECTOR

One of the break-out young stars at the World Cup, Stefan De Vrij snubbed offers from around Europe to join up with Lazio. His agent later revealed the 22-year-old wanted to grow with the best. "De Vrij wanted to learn the Italian art of defending," Alex Kroes said. "He believes that with Lazio he can become the best defender in the world." Could he emulate a certain Jaap Stam's success in the capital?

"IN 40 YEARS OF MY CAREER EVERYONE HAS SURVIVED MY TRAINING METHODS AND IT IS ALL PUT TO GOOD USE. I HAVEN'T KILLED ANYONE YET."

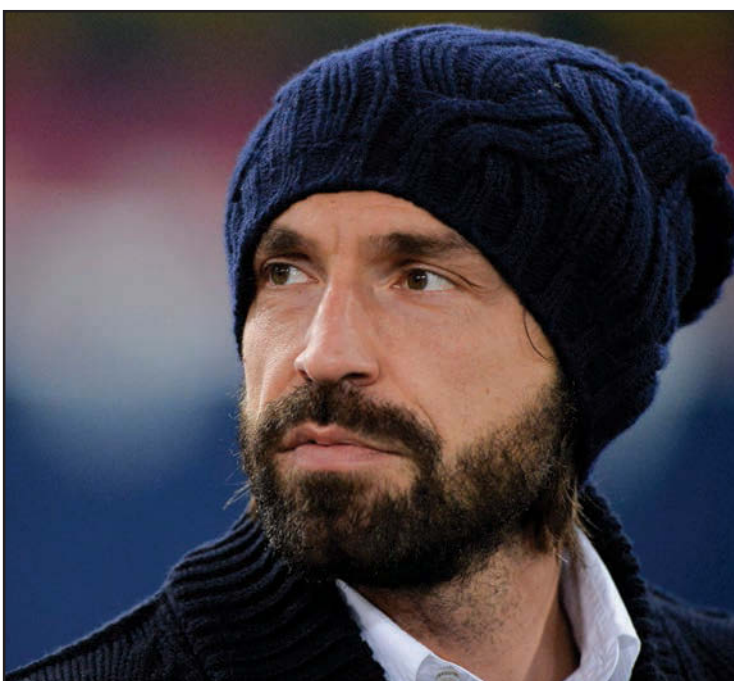
The 'yet' in Zdenek Zeman's sentence will concern the current Cagliari players

YOU HAD ME AT HELLO

New Italy Coach Antonio Conte says a phone call was all it took to accept the job. "I understood the enthusiasm of President Carlo Tavecchio and by the second call he knew he had made in-roads into my heart."

ALLEGRI OOOPS

Few expected Massimiliano Allegri to become the new Coach of Juventus and certainly not his girlfriend back in 2012. Gloria Patrizi aimed some vicious Twitter insults at the Bianconeri when her beau was still on the Milan bench. "Juve are the shame of Italy," wrote Patrizi two years ago. "Man of the match: Mazzoleni. #itsonlywaytheycanwin. Oh just give a cigar and a hat to Conte and he becomes Al Pacino... Simply ridiculous!"



PIRLO NOT IMPRESSED

Juventus started a new Internet meme with jugglers, singers and other novelty acts trying to break Andrea Pirlo's famously ice-cool demeanour. With the hashtag #pirloisnotimpressed fans are invited to send in videos or pictures to see if they can get the Italy midfielder to smile.



TRANSFER TRUTHS

We should have known the minute Adriano Galliani declared there was "a 99.9 per cent chance" Mario Balotelli would be staying at Milan that the door was opened for Liverpool to swoop in and offer the striker another crack at the Premier League. Super Mario departs having scored 30 goals in 54 appearances for the Rossoneri during his 19-month spell there.

ILLEGIBLE JUVE

Juventus were forced to scrap the new yellow lettering for names and shirt numbers on the back of their jerseys, as it made them too difficult to read on a white background. UEFA rules dictate numbers should be clearly visible from 50 metres away.



PRESENTS

LIGABUE
MONDOVISIONE
TOUR
MONDO 2014

OCTOBER 18 2014

TORONTO

CASINO RAMA

DOORS: 8.00 PM SHOWTIME: 9.00 PM
TICKETS: WWW.TICKETMASTER.CA
CASINO RAMA BOX OFFICE

PANTANI PINK

Cesena's new pink away shirt was unveiled pre-season honouring Giro d'Italia and Tour de France-winning cyclist Marco Pantani. The Italian, born in the city, died in 2004 of acute cocaine poisoning. The winning rider of the Giro wears a pink jersey.



INSIGNE INSULTS

Despite being young, talented and having fired Napoli to the Coppa Italia recently, Lorenzo Insigne cannot seem to get along with the club faithful. A latest falling out following the Partenopei's Champions League qualifying tie with Athletic at San Paolo resulted in the striker's wife tweeting the fans "don't deserve him." Coach Rafael Benitez was eager to put the matter to bed, appealing: "The players are those of Napoli and must be helped, especially when they go wrong."



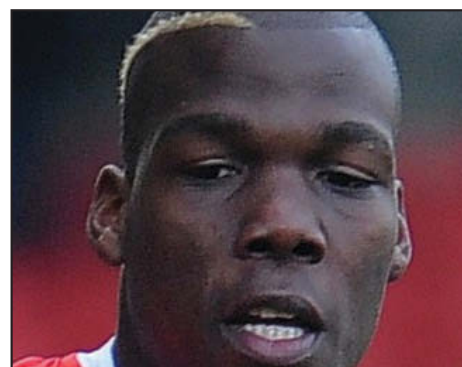
JAVIER OR KIM?

"Javier Mascherano is a fine suggestion, but I also really like Kim Basinger." Napoli boss Rafa Benitez had a number of transfer targets on his mind during the summer.



EVRA'S LEGEND

New Juventus signing Patrice Evra has no doubt who is the best he's ever played with. "Ryan Giggs. He's a legend and has maintained his quality over the course of time."



POGBA JOINS PESCARA

Serie B side Pescara have a famous name in their ranks, but Juventus fans can rest assured Paul is still in Turin. His older brother Mathias is the Pogba who has signed for the Delfini, the 23-year-old striker who had played in League One for Wrexham and Crewe.

"FOR ME, IDEAS ARE BORN IN ITALY AND THEN STOLEN BY OTHER NATIONS."

Gian Piero Gasperini will never forgive the invention of the Hawaiian pizza



ROMA STADIUM TAKES SHAPE

Roma President James Pallotta and his investors will help build a Metro station to serve better transport links to their new stadium. This part of the project, agreed with the Mayor of Rome in New York, adds a further €50m to the overall cost. "We have big plans to make Roma become one of the biggest sporting brands in the world," said Pallotta. "Our ambition is to make Roma a global community."

COPPA BITES BACK

There was a Luis Suarez-style bite during a Coppa Italia tie and, like the Uruguayan on Giorgio Chiellini at the World Cup, it was not spotted by the referee. Bari player Giuseppe De Luca reacted angrily to Gianmario Comi of Avellino's bite and got himself sent off for dissent, adding insult to literal injury.

"ANTONIO CONTE CALLED ME AND SAID THE ONLY THING THAT CHANGES FROM BEING A PLAYER TO A COACH IS YOU DON'T SLEEP AT NIGHT ANYMORE!"

Pippo Inzaghi realises a tactician is like a new father



CIGARETTES AND FOOTBALL

Former Lazio fan favourite Paul Gascoigne is returning to football. The 47-year-old Englishman is set to play for Hayward Sunday League side Abbey. Gazza met Abbey manager Chris Foster, a taxi driver, while nipping out to buy cigarettes...

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE



**SCORE A ONE YEAR, 6 ISSUE SUBSCRIPTION
AT AN INCREDIBLE RATE!**

go to soccer360.net/score.html

**SOCCKER 360 MAGAZINE: FEATURING THE BEST OF
SERIE A, EPL, LA LIGA, BUNDESLIGA, MLS AND SO MUCH MORE**

Olympic Trophies^{Ltd.}
S I N C E 1 9 6 3

*We provide awards
for all your events!*

SPORTSevents
SCHOOLceremonies
CORPORATEfunctions

905.856.5599 • olympictrophies.com

**NINO D'AVERSA
B A K E R Y**

Taste The Tradition

TRATTORIA • PIZZERIA • PASTICCERIA • GELATERIA

DOWNSVIEW | 1 Toro Road | 416.638.3271
THORNHILL | 7287 Yonge Street | 905.881.7393
WOODBIDGE | 7960 Kipling Avenue | 905.851.2211
MAPLE | 3120 Rutherford Road | 905.832.8395
AURORA | 230 Wellington Street East | 905.727.5577

Final Word

It has been a depressing summer for Italian football fans and Susy Campanale is tired of the excuses

No Pride in Serie A Shambles



I am proud to be Italian, but there are times when the calcio world really pushes me to the edge of that assertion. For example, the fact the new President of the Federation was elected with 63 per cent of the vote despite making alleged racist comments during his presentation speech. That put me off. Now Italian football is represented by a man who says African players go from “eating bananas” one week to being in the Lazio starting XI the next. He is the figurehead for combating racist abuse in stadiums. Taste the irony.

Carlo Tavecchio was consistently described by his supporters as the kind of new, modern face the football movement needed. He's 72, has been President of the LND amateur League for 19 years and worked closely with Franco Carraro – who was in charge of the FIGC during the Calciopoli scandal. This is a man who can make off-hand racist comments and doesn't appear to realise why they are offensive. We are being led by that uncle whose blathering you try to ignore at Christmas dinner just to keep the family peace. A brave new world indeed...

Tavecchio is just the most blatant symbol of what's gone wrong in Italian football. The 2014-15 Serie B season started on August 30. When was the 22nd team in the League finally chosen to participate in this campaign? August 29. They released a fixture list with 21 teams following Siena's bankruptcy, then issued a new version with a big X filling in for whoever was going to be allowed in at the last minute. It's frankly difficult to argue your football movement isn't a farce when that happens.

Milan are the poster boys for poor club management and this summer went into embarrassment overdrive. Clarence Seedorf was sacked for Pippo Inzaghi, a man with only marginally more experience of being a Coach thanks to two years working in their youth academy with teenagers. You have to feel sorry for old Filippo, who will inevitably be the patsy for poor results and shoved aside in favour of President Silvio Berlusconi to take all the credit if he wins.

Selling Mario Balotelli was not that bad an idea, really. Milan tried to make him a leader and just highlighted his personality shortcomings further, so perhaps at Liverpool Super Mario can relax safe in the knowledge people don't expect that much from him. However, the Rossoneri were presented with a series of options to replace Balo and naturally zeroed in on the ageing striker living off past glories who at one point was called a top player: Fernando Torres of Chelsea. It's rather sad to see Adriano Galliani and Berlusconi act as if they've performed a great coup by getting players well past their prime on cheap deals, like excitedly telling everyone at work about this great band you've discovered and it turns out their last hit was five years ago. If you found their CD in the bargain basement bin, there's a reason for that.

Napoli added to Italy's co-efficient woes with two poor performances against Athletic Bilbao, meaning Serie A teams have lost the Champions League play-off four times in the last five years. We may as well just stop bothering and send third place sides straight into the Europa League. How did Rafa Benitez possibly think of winning with Miguel Angel Britos at left-back? He's already a terrible central defender, let alone in a position that he's even less suited to. Worst of all was hearing Benitez and his players insist it “is not a failure” to be out of the Champions League. They lost the play-off and with it €20m in revenue. That's the very definition of a failure.

How are Italian fans ever supposed to regain their pride if the clubs, Federation and Nazionale keep finding excuses for this shambolic state of affairs?



New FIGC President Carlo Tavecchio is only one example of a terrible Italian summer



**Committed to providing excellence
in our automotive services.**



Basil Policaró



Paul Policaró



Tony Policaró



PORSCHE CENTRE OAKVILLE



Family Owned. Family Operated. Since 1979.



1-877-389-3444



info@policaró.ca



policaró.ca





instinct takes over

#predatorinstinct

adidas.ca/predator